University of Alberta

Exploring Children' Loneliness Feelings

by

Anna Kirova-Petrova

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Elementary Education

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1996

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-18054-9

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Anna Kirova-Petrova

Title of Thesis: **Exploring Children's Loneliness Feelings**

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Year this Degree Granted: 1996

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may by printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's written permission.

11432-78 Avenue,
Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 0N3
Canada

Date: July 9, 1996

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Exploring Children's Loneliness Feelings** submitted by Anna Kirova-Petrova in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. J. Blakey (Supervisor)

Dr. M. van Manen

Dr. M. Juliebo

Dr. J. Ellis

Dr. L. Everett-Turner

Dr. R. Jevne

for Dr. B. Levering (External Examiner)

Date: April 17, 1996

ABSTRACT

The concern of this study is elementary school children's lived experiences of loneliness. Attention is given to the way the question of meaning of the experience in children's lives is eclipsed in the existing premises accepted by the majority of researchers investigating loneliness. It is argued that to really understand the nature of the phenomenon of children's loneliness it is not sufficient to look at possibilities of loneliness only in the realm of intersubjectivity, but also within the development of the self. The study attempts to show the world of a child as it is lived in the experience of loneliness and thus to reach a humanistic understanding of the phenomenon.

The study is carried out from hermeneutic phenomenological perspective which is especially sensitive to the structures of meaning and significance of every day human experiences (van Manen, 1990). The research methodology involves in depth conversations with seventy five elementary school children from kindergarten to grade six, exploring their experiences of loneliness. An original interpersonal communication boardgame was developed in order to enter gently into young children's lifeworlds at the beginning of the hermeneutic conversations.

Loneliness appears to be a common theme in the lives of young children. Even children who do not suffer outright neglect, abandonment, or peer rejection go through events that bring them face to face with the fears, uncertainties and pain of loneliness. In contrasting the phenomenon of loneliness with similar yet different experiences of aloneness, solitude, separation, and boredom this study is able to show the complex manner in which the young child' sense of loneliness modifies and impacts on his or her life and on his or her appropriation of human relations, social space, lived time, and the integration of the embodied self and world.

The meaning of the experience of loneliness as an important pedagogical ingredient in the shaping of the child's social identity and the formation of inner self raises the questions of the pedagogy of loneliness feelings which is viewed as adults' ethical responsibilities for the manner in which young people are subjects of loneliness in various social settings.

Acknowledgements

Throughout the course of my research I have received continuous assistance and encouragement from many individuals. I am indebted to them for the ongoing guidance and support that led me to the completion of this study. I wish to extend my sincerest appreciation to:

My advisor Dr. Janis Blakey for encouraging me to follow my heart in the exploration of young children's loneliness feelings. I will always be grateful for her understanding, support and help throughout the course of my writing. I am particularly thankful for her help in the process of mastering the English language and for her indefatigable endeavor to help me find the most appropriate way of expressing my thoughts.

Dr. Max van Manen, for helping me to discover the world of phenomenological research and for guiding my inquiry of children's lived experiences of loneliness. I will always be indebted to him for teaching me to not only see the phenomenon of children's loneliness, but also to show this phenomenon in the text of this study. I am particularly thankful for his endless encouragement in the process of phenomenological writhing and for giving me the strength and courage to complete this study.

Dr. Moira Juliebo, for her affable presence in my life as a graduate student and for her much appreciated suggestions which often generated new directions in this study. I am especially thankful for her trust of me as a person and as a researcher.

The members of my committee for their thoughtful suggestions and encouragement. The insights gained during our meetings have assisted me in my research.

The Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta. I consider myself very fortunate to have studied in such a diverse academic community with many dedicated and competent people.

The seventy-five elementary school children who participated in the study and who shared with me their experiences of loneliness. I have been truly touched by their personal sharing that have changed my own understanding of childhood loneliness. I am most grateful to them for all I have learned. It is impossible to recognize their contributions individually; I hope that this text is a witness of my appreciation.

The administration and the teachers at the school who welcomed my research and provided an excellent atmosphere for my research in the school environment.

My son Peter whose experiences of loneliness have evoked my research interest in young children's loneliness feelings. I am especially thankful for his suggestions and help in the process of developing the interpersonal communication boardgame that facilitated my conversations with the participants tremendously.

My husband, my mother, and my friends for their encouragement and faith in me. Without their support, patience, and love, this challenging experience would have never be possible.

Finally I acknowledge with a great appreciation the assistance of the Social Science and Humanities Council of Canada, the Province of Alberta, the University of Alberta, and the Canadian Federation of University Women for their support of this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHING A HOME FOR THE QUESTION 1

Introduction 1

Existing Theoretical Perspective on Loneliness 3

Approaches to the Concept of Loneliness 3

Human Needs Approach 4

Cognitive Process Approach 6

Existential Phenomenological Approach 7

Summary of Existing Theoretical Perspective on Loneliness 9

Loneliness Feeling 10

The Meaning of Loneliness 14

Developmental Perspective on Loneliness 15

Age-Related Development of Loneliness 15

Children's Loneliness and Peer Relations 16

Children's Self-Perception of Feeling Lonely 17

The Development of the Self and the Possibility of Loneliness 18

Pre-Identity, Self Differentiation and Possibility of Loneliness 19

Acquisition of Specular Image and Possibility of Loneliness 21

Narcissism and Possibility of Loneliness 22

Syncretic Sociability and Possibility of Loneliness 23

Summary of Developmental Perspective on Loneliness 24

Conclusions 25

CHAPTER 2

A WAY TO UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S LONELINESS 27

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Human Experience 27

Personal Experience as a Starting Point 29

Descriptions from Others 30

Conducting the Study 31

Ethical Considerations 31

The Participants 32

Close Observation 33

The "Feeling Game" 33

The Conversations 34

Uncovering the Thematic Aspects in the Descriptions 36

Phenomenological Research and Pedagogy 37

CHAPTER 3

REFLECTING ON THE PHENOMENON OF CHILDREN'S LONELINESS 39

LONELINESS AND ALONENESS 39

Introduction 39

You are Lonely When You are All by Yourself 40

Lonely Time 41

Lonely Place 42

The "Sound" of Loneliness 42

Loneliness as a Body Experience 44

Alone in the Dark 45

Closing Remarks 47

CHAPTER 4

LONELINESS AND SOLITUDE 48

Introduction 48

A Secret Place 48

In a Secret Place One Finds Oneself at Home 49

In a Secret Place One "Comes to Oneself" 52

When the Secret Place Becomes a Hiding Place 55

Closing Remarks 57

CHAPTER 5

LONELINESS AND SEPARATION 60

Introduction 60

Away from Mom 61

Feeling of Being Left 63

Relatedness versus Separation 66

Feeling Excluded 69

Closing Remarks 73

CHAPTER 6

LONELINESS AND BOREDOM 75

Introduction 75

Having Nothing to Do 77

What Shall I Do Now, Mom? 79

That Wasn't What I Needed 82

Closing Remarks 84

CHAPTER 7

THE PEDAGOGY OF LONELINESS 86

Introduction 86
Lack of Privacy, Loneliness, and Supervision 90
Lack of Supervision and Loneliness 91
The Need for Pedagogical Understanding 94
Closing Remarks 96
CHAPTER 8
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 100
EPILOGUE 106
REFERENCES 110
APPENDIX A
Consent Form 118
APPENDIX B
Interpersonal Communication Game's Board 120
APPENDIX C
Interpersonal Communication Game's Cards 121
APPENDIX D
Instructions to the Participants from Grades Five and Six 125

CHAPTER 1
ESTABLISHING A HOME FOR THE QUESTION

All the lonely people, where do they all come from?
All the lonely people, where do they all
belong?
"Eleanor Rigby," Lennon/ McCartney, 1966 (in Ryan, 1972)

Introduction

As "every project of phenomenological inquiry is driven by a commitment of an abiding concern" (van Manen, 1990, p. 31), I need to explain the events that led to my concern with loneliness and my inquiry into children's loneliness feelings.

My interest in the topic of children's loneliness feelings began in the spring of 1992, a year and a half after my family moved to Canada. While watching the news on T.V., my attention was captured by an announcement. The speaker said that one out of every five children in Canada feels lonely and isolated from his or her peers and everyone who has a concern about the problem is invited to call 1-800-..... Not being a T.V. watcher I never saw the announcement again. It did, however, have a profound effect on me; so much so that I started thinking about children's loneliness and asking myself questions. I have to admit that at that time I was particularly sensitive to the problem of loneliness and social isolation. Perhaps the announcement would not have captured my attention if the word "lonely" had not been mentioned in it. I was feeling very lonely at that time. Since I spoke no English when we came to Canada, I had lived in social isolation and, of course, experienced loneliness for almost a year. Besides, my seven-year old son, who was then in grade two, was in a very difficult stage of transition from complete social isolation at school (when he did not speak English) to partial isolation (when he started speaking some English). It was not a new experience for him because he was in the same situation one year earlier when he and I accompanied my husband to a post-doctoral position in France. And yet, my son didn't seem to have learned from his previous experience and was still extremely anxious about not being able to make any friends. So I was particularly sensitive to children's feelings of social isolation.

But what was really an "eye-opener" for me was that the T.V. announcement made me aware of the possibility of my son's loneliness feelings. I knew that he was not happy, but it never occurred to me before that he might feel lonely too. I had hoped that our love and care would somehow compensate for his frustration and unhappiness at school, but was I right? He might have felt lonely in his kindergarten class in France too, but I, a professional educator and

a loving mother, failed to recognize his real feelings being preoccupied with his "social status in his peer group." I was stunned. I was ashamed of myself. How many other children in the world who, like my son, feel lonely and isolated receive little or no understanding and perhaps no sympathy from their parents and teachers?

I started thinking over my life. I recalled my experience as a teacher in a preschool in Bulgaria almost fifteen years ago. All the children in the school not only attended a full-day program, but also stayed over night three times a week. All of a sudden I remembered their faces, their eyes on the days that they were supposed to stay over night. The children were very young--three to four years of age, but they knew which days they were to stay over night. They were unusually quiet on those days. There was very little laughter, and very few games. But the evenings were really dramatic. The children did not let me go home, even though I stayed with them until 9:00 p.m. They asked me to read one more story before I left them. They insisted that I should come to work early on the next morning. Some of them were crying and would not stop unless I sat on their beds and held their hands. Were they lonely? And if they were, was I fully aware of their feelings? What if I had left more room for them to talk about their feelings, about their fears or desires? What else could I have done to help them feel better? Would it have been possible to alleviate their loneliness at all?

I also recall my own experiences of feeling lonely as an only child in a family that separated when I was five years old. Where were these memories of mine hidden for so long? Why did I keep them so deep in my heart that I could not even recognize my own childhood feelings in my son? Was I embarrassed to acknowledge that as a child I often felt lonely? Or was I trying to forget my feelings when my parents divorced and when I was alone at home, waiting for mom to come back from work? Or was I not sensitive enough to my own child's feelings just because I have never had his particular experience of going to school in a different country? Is it possible for us to be good parents or educators if we let "the child in us" be lost? What is it like for a young child to feel lonely? How can we understand this loneliness? And what part does it play in a child's life and development?

These are the main questions of this study. They have arisen from aspects of my life, both personal and professional. It is personal in that I have interest in the meaning of my own child's loneliness; it is professional in that I wish to disclose the lived experience of young children's loneliness in order to make a pedagogical contribution to the field of early childhood education. These insights should increase teachers' ability to understand and to act tactfully in their every-day living with children so that their feelings of loneliness may be alleviated.

The study is carried out from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective (van Manen, 1990). This means, first, that the descriptive possibilities in elementary school children's

experiences of loneliness, as they had been lived first hand by participants, were collected. Second, these experiential possibilities were systematically interrogated and interpreted, their meanings were made explicit in written text. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach is particularly appropriate since this research is not only an attempt to question existing concepts of children's loneliness, it also explores the lived meaning of young children's experiences of loneliness.

Existing Theoretical Perspectives on Loneliness

"The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much" (van Manen, 1990, p. 46). Perhaps one of the finest examples of such a case is the phenomenon of loneliness. Loneliness is as old as mankind and it is among the most fundamental of human experiences. The theme of loneliness has dominated Western philosophic thought and literature since the time of the Greek myths and dramas (the legends of Prometheus; Oedipus; Antigone). But loneliness, Mijuskovic (1979) suggests, did not develop into a distinctly formulated concern in Western history until roughly the modern period, around the 17th century when the scientific and philosophic revolutions posited the distinction between objective and subjective qualities. Surprisingly, research on loneliness is still evolving. The theoretical discussion on loneliness by behavioral scientists started in the late thirties with Zilboorg's article on loneliness in 1938. Empirical investigations using objective measures of loneliness emerged in the sixties (Eddy, 1961; Whitehorn, 1961), but the most intensive period for loneliness research started in the seventies after Weiss' (1973) book Loneliness: The experience of emotional and social isolation was published. Since then researchers have been trying to explain why some individuals endure the experience of loneliness more than do others in seemingly comparable situations, or why some people seem to cope with loneliness more effectively than others, and so on. And yet, there is still much to understand about the nature of loneliness itself. What is there about loneliness that makes it possible for it to be experienced in the way it is? Do we all mean the same thing when we think or say "I feel lonely"?

A starting point of such an inquiry, however, is an exploration of the existing theoretical concepts and assumptions, research findings and speculations. In the following sections of this chapter, I will attempt to analyze critically the existing perspectives on loneliness in order to elicit the assumptions which underlay mainstream research and theory-building. I will also attempt to present an original analysis of loneliness as a feeling and as a felt meaning, and the possibility of loneliness feeling based on certain assumptions about the self.

Approaches to the Concept of Loneliness

Derlaga and Margulis (1982) note three stages of concept development. In Stage 1, the

importance of the concept is justified. In Stage 2, the concept is explored and attempts are made to demonstrate its similarities and differences from other phenomena. Only in Stage 3 do theories emerge. Such theories involve a set of concepts plus a series of logically compatible statements about how the constructs are related to one another. As Derlaga and Margulis (1982) note, most speculation about loneliness has been at Stages 1 and 2. Most models for understanding loneliness have been neither fully nor systematically articulated at the level of a true theory.

In their review of the theoretical approaches to loneliness, Perlman and Peplau (1982) have defined eight such approaches: psychodynamic, phenomenological, existential-humanistic, sociological, interactionist, cognitive, privacy, and system theory. Paloutzian and Janigian (1987) have classified, in order of influence, the three main theoretical approaches to loneliness: (a) the social-emotional typology pioneered by Weiss (1973); (b) the cognitive model as suggested by Perlman and Peplau (1982); and (c) loneliness as a fundamental existential phenomenon, as suggested by Moustakas (1961).

In this chapter, I will briefly present the three theoretical approaches which have been the most influential in forming the "pre-understandings" of the phenomenon of children's loneliness in the present study. These approaches are: the human need approach, the cognitive process approach, and the existential phenomenological approach.

Human Needs Approach

The human needs approach (Fromm-Reichmann, 1959/1980; Sullivan, 1953) views loneliness within a developmental context, as related to unfulfilled individual needs for various types of social interrelations at different stages of development. Fromm-Reichmann (1959/1980) states that "The longing for interpersonal intimacy stays with every human being from infancy throughout life; and there is no human being who is not threatened by its loss" (p. 342). Based on her clinical work with schizophrenics, Fromm-Reichmann asserts that loneliness is an extreme state: "The kind of loneliness I am discussing is nonconstructive if not disintegrative, and it shows in, or leads ultimately to, the development of psychotic states. It renders people who suffer it emotionally paralysed and helpless" (p. 342). She asserts that the human being is born with the need for contact and tenderness which are usually provided by the person who tends and mothers the child. In childhood, the healthy youngster's longing for intimacy is, according to Sullivan (1953), fulfilled by his or her participation in activities with adults, while in the juvenile, this need is fulfilled by finding peers and acceptance. Fromm-Reichmann states that the process by which the child withdraws into social isolation and into his or her substitute fantasies may occur "if the mothering one weans him from her caressing tenderness before he is ready to try for the satisfactions of the modified needs for intimacy characteristic of his

ensuing developmental phase" (p. 344).

Sullivan (1953) defines loneliness as "the exceedingly unpleasant and driving experience connected with an inadequate discharge of the need for human intimacy, for interpersonal intimacy" (p. 290). He notes the unfortunate effects on future development if a person's early need for tenderness remains unsatisfied.

Similarly, Weiss (1973) conceptualizes loneliness predominantly in terms of descriptions of the social and emotional attachment system. The genesis of his theory is found in Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory which, as Weiss suggests, he applies to loneliness. Weiss (1973) theorizes that loneliness is a response to the absence of some particular type of relationship. He argues that loneliness originates from six types of deficits: attachments (relationships in which a person receives a sense of safety and security), social integration (having a network of relationships), opportunity for nurture (where one feels responsible for the well being of another), reassurance of worth (relationships where one's skills and abilities are noted), reliance (one can count on assistance from another), and guidance (where one receives advice).

Weiss (1987) believes that there are two different types of loneliness: emotional loneliness, and loneliness of social isolation. "The loneliness of emotional isolation is an expression of an emotional-cognitive-perceptual system that is an adult development of the attachment system linking infants to parent figures, a system described by John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980)" (Weiss, 1987, p.8). Thus, Weiss states that emotional loneliness occurs among those without attachment figures when there is a feeling of vulnerability to threat. He also emphasizes the importance of understanding the functioning of the attachment system both in children and in adults, in order to truly understand the loneliness of emotional isolation. He points that an attachment figure is not the same as "someone close," or "an intimate," or a "confidant," but rather "a figure that is security providing because of a perceptual and emotional sense of linkage to the figure" (1987, p. 11).

The absence of an accessible social network, which gives rise to feelings of meaninglessness and marginality as well as aimlessness and boredom, Weiss (1973) identifies as loneliness of social isolation. In his later writings, however, Weiss (1987) acknowledges that his initial thought in which he "identified the loneliness of social isolation with the absence of community of friends, has been shown to be faulty" (p. 12).

Margalit (1994) argues that when children experience difficulties due to their increased need for support and help, or when adults and peers reveal failures or difficulties in meeting these needs, the loneliness experienced may be considered as related to these unfulfilled human needs.

In summary, the main assumptions of the human needs approach are that loneliness is an unnatural condition, a pathological experience, a state similar to illness which stems directly from the lack of interpersonal intimacy and/or accessible social network.

In regard to the main questions of this study, the assumptions of the human needs approach have been insightful in the following directions: 1) The interpersonal close relations in early childhood have an important role in fulfilling the human need for intimacy within a developmental context. 2) The role of parents and peers as attachment figures in the fulfilment of the basic human need for interpersonal intimacy changes through the child's development. 3) The absence or loss of a particular type of relationship may be experienced subjectively as loneliness.

Cognitive Process Approach

The cognitive approach to loneliness, as developed and advocated by Perlman and Peplau (1982), underscores the perceptions, comparisons, and evaluations of social relations in the experience of loneliness. In articulating the role played by cognition, the authors draw on attribution theory. They propose that loneliness occurs when the individual perceives a discrepancy between two factors: the desired and the achieved pattern of social relations. Loneliness is seen as the result of an internal event within the individual. The comparison between the actual and the desired quality and quantity of social relations is typically related to the comparison of self-perceptions and perceptions of others. Cognitive processes, especially attribution, have a moderating influence on the loneliness experiences. These processes colour the experience of loneliness, shaping and guiding the individual's feelings and actions. Peplau and Perlman (1982) suggest that there are two classes of causes of loneliness: (1) the events or changes that precipitate the loneliness; and (2) the internal factors that may predispose the individual to be lonely. Cognitive cues regarding social dissatisfaction revolve around the theme of wanting a type of social relationship that is currently lacking, such as more or frequent interactions, a wider social network, and/or more intimate or closer relationships (Peplau, Miceli, & Morasch, 1982). The authors believe that subjective standards for relationships are derived by: (a) past experience that we draw on for our expectations; and (b) social comparison, which often can be unrealistic. Personal standards for relationships also change over time. Children identify themselves as lonely individuals following an inferential process, in which they map out their private experiences within a more general social map (Peplau, Miceli, & Morasch, 1982).

Although the cognitive approach does not view loneliness as a pathological experience, it does view it, similar to the human needs approach, from a social deficit point of view. Thus the rich and multidimensional phenomenon of loneliness is reduced to the experience of perceived

deficiency (in contrast to the real deficiency emphasized in human needs approach) of desired social network. It is true that the range and variability of loneliness cannot be understood without explicit recognition of human capacity to process information in meaningful ways and thereby to articulate human behaviour, but in my view, issues of consciousness and meaning have not received an adequate accounting in the cognitive approach to loneliness.

In regard to the main questions of the present study, however, the cognitive approach to the concept of loneliness has been insightful in the following directions: 1) The subjectively perceived indices of a person's social relations rather than his or her actual social relations are reflected in his or her feelings of loneliness. 2) Standards for relationships are subjective and they change over time. They are derived by past experiences.

Existential Phenomenological Approach

From the existential phenomenological perspective, Sadler and Johnson (1980) uphold not only the uniqueness of one's loneliness, but also that one's own experience of loneliness varies from situation to situation and from time to time. They do, however, believe that regardless of all the uniqueness of any given experience of loneliness, there are certain elements that lonely people have in common. They state that the most salient feature of loneliness is a special kind of feeling, a total feeling, which encompasses the entire self. Similarly, from an existential point of view, Moustakas (1972) sees this "central core" of loneliness as the existential core that is a feeling of apartness.

Besides the affective elements of loneliness, Sadler and Johnson (1980) emphasize also the cognitive elements of loneliness, which lead to realization that loneliness constitutes a distinctive form of self-perception which, however, is not necessarily a completely accurate perception of the existential situation. According to them, loneliness represents "a threat to or a break in the intentional structure of the experiencing self, especially in the realm of intersubjectivity" (p. 38). The authors define loneliness as "an experience involving a total and often acute feeling that constitutes a distinct form of self-awareness signalling a break in the basic network of the relational reality of self-world" (p. 39).

Based on Sadler's earlier writings (1969), in which he designated the rudimentary phenomenon underlying all experience as the personal world, the authors delineate four basic dimensions of the personal world which provide the foundation for the emergence of four types of loneliness. The personal world is defined as "an intentionally structured network that establishes the overall frame of reference within which encounters become meaningful" (p. 41). The concept of intentionality as the personal world includes an essentially pluralistic structure. The metaphor of dimension is used to refer specifically to the distinct basic possibilities within the pluralistic structure of the personal world. The personal world is oriented to the realization

of four distinct existential possibilities: 1) the unique destiny of the individual, the actualization of his or her inner self; 2) the tradition or culture of the individual, which provides many of the assumed values and ideas he or she employs to interpret his or her experience, and to define his or her existence; 3) the social environment of the individual which provides the field of organized relationships to other humans and spheres of behaviour wherein the terms of his or her membership, roles, and social destiny are established; and 4) the other persons with whom the individual may form I-Thou relationships such that his or her existence may unfold within the dual reality of a personal We.

Corresponding to the four directions in which the personal world appropriately unfolds, the dimensions of loneliness have been designated as cosmic, cultural, social, and interpersonal. As Sadler and Johnson (1980) state, the cosmic dimension is the most complex and it is meant to indicate at least three different perceptions of the self: 1) an individual's sense of relatedness to what he or she conceives to be reality as a whole (often referred to as Nature or the cosmos); 2) a sense of relatedness to a mysterious aspects of life that is of ultimate concern (such as God or Being); 3) a sense of relatedness to what an individual believes to be his or her unique destiny or an ultimate historical goal. The cultural dimension of loneliness is defined as feeling of estrangement from a cultural heritage that was originally a part of persons' perspective and style of life.

In the social dimension of loneliness an individual affectively perceives that he or she has been "shoved out, left out, shut out, shipped out, kept out, or lost sight of" (Sadler & Johnson, 1980, p. 50). Thus, the person sees himself or herself as an outcast, an outsider, a loner, a disconnected individual. The interpersonal dimension of loneliness as a felt self-awareness signals to a person that important interpersonal relationships have been severed, weakened, or threatened: "it is a communication that something essential is lacking in his personal world" (p. 54). Sadler and Johnson criticize Moustakas' (1961) writings, in which, according to them, he examined only the interpersonal dimension of loneliness, focusing on the subjective aspects of the experience, rather than its context and structure. They also suggest that loneliness becomes increasingly intolerable when it afflicts an individual in more than one dimension at the same time. One frequent consequence of being hit by loneliness, the authors suggest, is a feeling of helplessness or impotence that is related to the feeling that vital connections in the matrix of relationships within one's world have been weakened or severed.

This existential phenomenological approach, however, emphasizes mainly the contexts of the experiences of loneliness. Although this approach acknowledges that a perceived negative change in one's personal world provides the foundation for the emergence of a particular type of loneliness, it does not provide an understanding of the way in which a person dwells in the

world in the experience of loneliness. Like all other approaches, this existential phenomenological approach is still quite conceptual in its attempt to categorize loneliness instead of providing a phenomenological description of the lived experience of it.

In respect to the present study, the existential phenomenological approach to the concept of loneliness has been the most insightful in the following aspects: 1) The experience of loneliness is unique, and yet the most salient feature that all the experiences of loneliness have in common is a special kind of feeling that encompasses the entire self. 2) Loneliness is a form of acute self-awareness. 3) The dimensions of loneliness refer specifically to the distinct basic possibilities within the pluralistic structure of the personal world.

Summary of the Existing Theoretical Perspectives on Loneliness

Regardless of the different emphases within the different theoretical approaches, several areas of agreement can be observed (Russell, Cutrona, Rose, & Yurko, 1984). The first characteristic of loneliness, which different approaches agreed on is that loneliness is an aversive experience, similar to other negative affective states such as depression or anxiety. Loneliness, however, has not been shown to be related to one unique set of emotions, although sadness, pain and unhappiness are the accompanying feelings most frequently mentioned (Margalit, 1994).

The second agreement is based on the assumption that loneliness is a subjective experience, a distinct form of social isolation which reflects an individual's subjective perception of deficiencies in his or her network of social relationships. These deficiencies may be quantitative (e. g., not enough friends) or they may be qualitative (e. g., lack of intimacy with others).

The third agreement among different approaches toward defining loneliness is that loneliness is distinct from aloneness/solitude (Margalit, 1994). Solitude, being different from loneliness, involves a deliberate choice to be alone. Thus, in contrast to the consistently negative affect related to loneliness, solitude can be viewed as a pleasant, positive, and sometimes even desirable situation that may promote a creative experience or provide an opportunity for rest from stressful reality and overwork (Marcoen & Goossens, 1990, cited in Margalit, 1994).

In spite of the efforts of the different theoretical approaches to define loneliness, the question of the nature of loneliness is still an unsolved problem. In almost all the existing definitions, loneliness is defined as a concept rather than an experiential phenomenon. In his article Reflection on the Present State of Loneliness Research Weiss (1987) asserts that almost all existing definitions are not definitions but rather mini-theories, and what is wrong with them is "that they are insufficiently sensitive to loneliness's status as a real phenomenon" (p. 8). And

a real phenomenon can be described, but not in the same sense, defined. A narrative of loneliness as it is lived, a rich phenomenological description of the experience of loneliness is what is lacking in the existing literature. In order to understand the child's loneliness we need to understand how the personal world looks for the child when he or she feels lonely. Perhaps an attempt to reach such an understanding will have to start not with questions regarding the causes of loneliness or the "whys" of loneliness, but with the question "How is loneliness experienced?"

Loneliness Feeling

Wood (1977) asserts that "Perhaps one might say it is constitutive of human experience, for efficient response, verbal or motor, to environmental stimuli that might occur without any felt quality would seem not to be human experience - indeed, it would seem not even to be experience at all!" (p. 4). Thus it seems that feeling is absolutely central to any human experience. But what is the nature of the feeling that is central to the experience of loneliness?

In the literature on loneliness, there is no consensus about the nature of the feeling of loneliness. It is defined by different authors as: "discomforting," "total," "sense of something missing," "feeling of separateness from others or loss of significant other," "feeling of apartness," "feeling of being alone and disconnected or alienated," "feeling of meaninglessness," "feeling of emptiness," or "lack of relatedness." Apparently, it is not clearly articulated yet how the feeling of loneliness is a distinctive feeling and not, as noted earlier, "a feeling similar to other negative affective states such as anxiety or depression." Perhaps if we continue to search for the most correct definition of the nature of the feeling of loneliness we would never be entirely successful. The main difficulty of such a search lies in the perspective from which the feeling of loneliness is defined. In all existing definitions of loneliness there is an attempt to reduce or equate loneliness to a certain type of feeling. But do we understand an experience better if we have defined it in terms of another concept or conceptual qualification? To define the feeling of loneliness as "feeling of emptiness," or "feeling of meaninglessness" for example, is to try to substitute in the definition the feeling of loneliness with another feeling--"feeling X". By doing this, however, we do not solve the initial problem. On the contrary--we face even more difficult questions such as "How do we experience this 'feeling X' and if we do experience it in a certain way does that mean that what we experience when we feel lonely is identical to what we experience as a 'feeling X'?"

Another difficulty in the attempt to define the feeling of loneliness is reflected in the language that it is used to define the feeling of loneliness. The preposition "of" in this case does not express belonging, as it is meant, but rather it emphasizes an objective relation between the feeling and its origin. Thus this way of defining and talking about the feeling of

loneliness is not much different from the way of defining or talking about the love of nature, or the feeling of coldness, for example. The attempt, therefore, is made to define the feeling of loneliness as if loneliness exists objectively in the world "out there," and it is our, human's, ability to feel it. In other words, loneliness is seen as the "cause" of the feeling. Thus if the attempt is made towards defining the nature of the feeling of loneliness, then the first step would be to try to define the nature of loneliness itself as if it were an existent entity, like cold or music. Then, the next step would be defining the nature of the feeling that the person has of this existent entity, and which may vary depending on person's "ability" to feel. But since loneliness does not exist in the world independent from the person feeling it, and it is not "something" that a person may or may not have feelings of, it is very unlikely to have feeling of loneliness. It is rather loneliness feeling that we have and which is, perhaps, central to the experience of loneliness. The question, therefore, becomes: "What is the essence of loneliness feeling?" But perhaps before we ask this question, we should ask "What is a feeling?"

The phenomenological approach to feelings and emotions starts from "the undeniable fact that consciousness is always a being conscious of something else and that we are conscious of our existing, that means our being physically subjected to a given situation" (Buytendijk, 1950. p. 129). This "being subjected" is not a causal relation, but it means that the situation must be responded to. The replay is the attitude, the feeling, the intentional act and not a reaction in a physiological sense.

Further, Buytendijk states that the most profound basis of the phenomenon of feeling is the fact that we find ourselves as subjects (in our "this-ness") only by standing apart and viewing ourselves in the situation in which we are involved. From this point of view, feelings and emotions are not only relations of an existing human being and the world, but also they are affirmations of that human being's attitude toward situations. Feelings, then do not inform us about the "nature" of the situation, the object, person, or event, but the importance for us of that situation, object, person, or event. Thus we shall agree with Plessner's concise formulation: "Feeling is essentially the relation of my self to something" (cited in Heller, 1979, p. 7). If feeling is the relation of the self to something, then what does it mean to feel? "To feel means to be involved in something," states Heller (1979, p. 7).

If we take into consideration this viewpoint in our attempt to understand the essence of loneliness feeling, we need first to accept that loneliness feeling is essentially a relation of the self to something. Perhaps it will be useful to go back to some of the existing definitions of loneliness. The "self" as self-awareness, is explicitly present only in Sadler's and Johnson's definition of loneliness. What is more important in their definition, however, is that loneliness is viewed as a feeling, signalling a break in the basic network of the relational reality of self-world.

This point of view makes it clear that the feeling which is involved in the experience is not of loneliness but of a "break in the personal world." Thus loneliness is not "the break" itself; it is rather the felt quality of this "break." But if the experiencing self perceives its relation to the world as broken, then can we say that for the self to feel lonely is to be "involved in something" in Heller's notion? What does it mean to be involved?

Being involved is a way of being in the world. Human beings involve themselves continuously in the density of reality. Human reality is equivalent to being conscious and this can be defined only as open to the world, as cast upon the world. Hence the "involvement is not a matter of acting, thinking, speaking, producing information, reacting, and all this being accompanied by involvement therein; rather it is a matter of involvement itself being the inherent constructive factor in acting, thinking, etc." (Heller, 1979. p. 8). From this point of view, involvement does not necessarily show itself in action (in behaviour)--it is an inherent structural part of acting and thinking rather than a mere "accompaniment."

To feel means not only to be involved, but also to be involved in a certain manner, in being-in-the-world. The manner of involvement depends on what is the centre of the consciousness--the involvement itself, or the object in which the person is involved. In our attempt to understand the nature of loneliness feeling, it is important to understand what is the centre of the person's consciousness at the moment of the experience. Heller suggests that although involvement usually remains in the background of consciousness, it also necessarily plays the role of figure, that is, it inevitably comes into the centre of consciousness from time to time. Involvement becomes figure when acting, thinking, relating to someone or something is blocked. If we return to Sadler's and Johnson's definition of loneliness as an acute self-awareness signalling the break of the relational reality of self-world, it appears that loneliness feeling as an involvement has a "rather figure characteristic." In other words, the involvement itself, and not the object(s) in which the person is involved, is at the centre of his or her consciousness while he or she feels lonely. This, however, does not mean that the person can bring into the focus of his or her consciousness only one feeling at the moment. When a person feels lonely some other feelings such as sadness, dissatisfaction, anger, helplessness and so on can be brought into his or her consciousness simultaneously, but this does not mean that the other feelings are inherent parts of loneliness feeling. Loneliness feeling is a complicated combination of various aspects of involvement. These aspects of involvement reflect the type of duration of the involvement (momentary or continued); the type of the affect of the involvement on personality (affecting only part of personality or its whole); the type of orientation of the involvement (oriented towards the past, the present, or the future); the profundity of the involvement (deep or superficial); and the magnitude of the involvement

(intensive or extensive).

From this point of view, it seems that loneliness feeling is an intensive involvement that deeply affects the whole personality of the person experiencing it, and that it can be oriented towards the past and/or the present. We do need, however, to take into consideration that feelings are "things that come and go or wax and wane in a few seconds" (Ryle, 1949/1980, p. 97). In other words, if a person feels lonely this does not mean that he or she keeps on feeling, or he or she steadily feels lonely. Thus it seems that as an involvement the loneliness feeling has a limited duration. But since it is a feeling that involves the entire self of the person experiencing it, its effect on the person's relation to the world could be extended.

To "identify" the nature of the involvement which embodies the loneliness feeling, however, is not sufficient in our attempt to uncover the essence of loneliness feeling. To do so, we need to consider not only that every single involvement is a different, specific feeling, but also that there are as many feelings as there are situations as Buytendijk (1950) suggests. In other words, loneliness feeling is inseparable from the situation in which it occurs. The situation is created by the mode in which the individual has accepted it (i. e. by his/her chosen projection). This projection is not the result of reasoning and the choice is not arbitrary, but still there is in the situation and the backward reference to one's existential history an antecedent that works only by its signification and hence is no cause. Every feeling, therefore, has a signification that makes us find the thing that is signified. What is the nature of this "some-thing" that loneliness feeling signifies?

Heller suggests that this "something", on the one hand, does not in the least signify a concretely determined object, and on the other hand, it is, at any rate, present. In other words, loneliness feeling could be viewed as a relation of the self to "something" that is present, even though not necessarily a concretely determined object. According to Sadler and Johnson, loneliness is a signal to the self about itself. In other words, loneliness signals how the self stands in the world. In their definition, the feeling of loneliness signals a break in the basic network of the relational reality of self-world. But this "break" does not have to be concretely present in order to be felt by the person involved in the situation. What is more important, is perhaps the significance of this "something" to the person involved in the situation. And this significance is the embodied meaning of the situation in which a person is involved. As Willis (1991) suggests, "since we are humans there may not be at the centre of our life-worlds any pure perceptions or feelings untainted by the meanings we impose upon them" (p. 176). But what is the relation between the subjective meaning of loneliness feeling and the essence of loneliness feeling? What is the meaning of loneliness?

The Meaning of Loneliness

Mijuskovic (1979) states that "loneliness is constituted in consciousness as both (1) a meaning; and (2) a feeling" (p. 15). As a meaning, the essence of loneliness, according to him, consists in the overwhelming desire of the yet unrelated ego to locate, unify, connect, or bind itself in relation to other egos or objects. But desire is a feeling - hence involvement. Of course, this does not mean that desire as a feeling is identical with loneliness as a feeling since they are different types of involvement. If we accept that involvement is nothing but the regulative function of the social organism (the subject, the self) in its relation to the world, as Heller (1979) suggests, then the essence of loneliness as a meaning (according to Mijuskovic) seems to be a feeling/involvement (according to Heller). Perhaps this "contradiction" would not exist if we accept the human being as a whole. Only if we do so, can we understand that all manifestations of human life--acting, thinking, feeling, and perceiving, are a unified process which can be separated only functionally. "During the development of the Ego acting, feeling, perceiving, as well as thinking all become functionally differentiated and, in a parallel process, immediately reintegrated into each other" (Heller, 1979, p. 24). From this point of view, there is no feeling without conceptualization and there is no thinking without feeling. As Wittgenstein said: "Emotions are expressed in thoughts...A thought rouses emotions in me" (cited in Heller, 1979, p. 24).

But can we conceptually express and communicate the loneliness feeling? As Hume argued, "I cannot conceptually convey or communicate to you the taste of pineapple if you have never experienced it; I cannot describe it to you because all description rests on relations between two or more existent entities" (cited in Mijuskovic, 1979, p. 15). Hence, from this point of view, it is not possible to bring one to "understand" the loneliness feeling by just talking about it, one can only allude to it. This opinion, however, does not exclude the possibilities of our being (self)consciously aware of experiencing a feeling, even though we may not always be able to express and thus to communicate our feelings. But by saying that, we should be aware that we can only express approximately what we feel and that we can never reach the state of "now I have expressed it accurately". Furthermore, we should be aware that when we express and thus communicate our feelings we cannot communicate and express them independently from the particular meaning that they have for us.

In other words, if we accept that there is no feeling without conceptualization-hence meaning, then it seems possible to uncover the essence of loneliness feeling through the descriptions of the personal meaning of the loneliness feeling as it is lived by different individuals. Given that a person's structure of meaning evolves through experiential connection with others from birth onwards, it is important to understand how the meaning of loneliness is

developed. But since we cannot separate the meaning from feeling, perceiving, acting, and thinking, we need to look at the person in his or her world as a whole and not to try to break the human development into pieces for some "scientific reasons." Only then can we understand the lived meaning of loneliness.

Developmental Perspectives on Loneliness

Regardless of how loneliness is defined by different theoretical approaches, the experience of loneliness is tied up with the different aspects of the relations between the self and others. Thus the development of these relations will be inseparably united with the experience of loneliness within the developmental context. Recent research on the etiology of subjective loneliness feelings has emphasized the importance of the developmental perspective for a full understanding of the loneliness construct (Anderson, 1986; Anderson, Mullins, & Johnson, 1987).

Age-Related Development of Loneliness

Rank (1929) suggests that from a psychoanalytic perspective, loneliness in children is ontological. It is tied up with their beings from the moment they are born. He believes that loneliness has physiological and neurological origins that can never be totally erased. They are tied to the experience of personal anxieties and uncertainties related to the shock of being born. The trauma of birth itself, the radical separation from the all-providing amniotic environment, may set the universal tone of primal terror for all succeeding separations and cause either the return or the continuing concealment of the unconscious wish to return to the womb.

Hartog (1980) disagrees with Rank's opinion and suggests that if one tries to explain differences in later responses to separation and loneliness, "one must seek the corresponding differences in early experiences and not simply look at the universal event that may form the substrate for lifelong anxiety. We must study early mother-child separation beyond parturition" (p. 15). According to Hartog (1980) the first and critical loneliness period lies between the age of six months and three years. He states that the primordial loneliness of early childhood encompasses all the real, symbolic, and imagined separations from the mother, whether they are felt physically, emotionally, physiologically or perhaps extrasensorily. Hartog believes that the second critical loneliness period is in late childhood and preadolescence when the companionship with peers, usually of the same sex, becomes very important. He states that adolescence is the loneliest developmental period because of the physical changes of puberty and the search for true identity as unique individuals.

Within the developmental construct, two distinct classes of causes for loneliness may be identified (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1989): precipitators and predisposers.

Precipitators. Events leading to changes in actual social relations (such as entering into a new school, moving into a new neighbourhood, or being in places where it is difficult to meet new people) can precipitate the onset of the experience of loneliness. Developmental changes in the child's capacity, desire, or need for social relations during the life cycle may initiate a sense of loneliness if they are not accompanied by corresponding changes in actual relations.

Predisposers. When changes and life transitions occur, certain factors may predispose individuals to become lonely or to persist in remaining lonely over time. At each stage of development, children are predisposed to certain kinds of problems and are protected from others because of their developing abilities, beliefs about their power, and their desire or motivation for control. Their sense of control over life events bridges between considerations of a cognitive-developmental and of a motivational nature (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1989).

Thus, according to Rothbaum and Weisz (1989), cognitive development can be conceptualized as one of the factors making the child susceptible to certain problems rather than causing those problems. Its impact may be viewed as a predisposer, setting the stage for the problems more or less likely to appear at particular ages. But cognitive development alone does not determine whether a problem of loneliness will arise (Margalit, 1994).

Inconsistent research findings for age differences have been revealed by reports on loneliness. On the one hand, there is well accepted literature that indicates adolescents' active search for identity, independence from parents, and increased need for peer relations result in greater loneliness, and on the other hand, some research findings show higher incidence of loneliness among younger children (Avrahami, 1992; Luftig, 1987; Margalit & Ronen, 1993). This contradiction, Margalit (1994) suggests, may be explained in two ways. First, it is possible that younger children are more open to disclose their feelings of loneliness than adolescents who can still experience higher level of loneliness. Second, it is possible that younger children are less mobile and less free to form friendships outside of school which make their feelings of loneliness more dependent of their in-class rejection from peers.

Children's Loneliness and Peer Relations

Within recent years, increasing interest in the feelings of children who are poorly integrated into their peer group is reflected in research in Canada (Heinlein & Spinner, 1985), the United States (Asher, Hymel & Renshaw, 1984), and Belgium (Marcoen & Brumagne, 1985). The possibility that loneliness would accompany peer rejection is quite plausible given the difficulty rejected children have in relating to other children in school (Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel, & Williams, 1990). It is clear from the research that rejected children are less successful in initiating interactions (Putallaz & Wasserman, 1990), and even when interacting they do not remain engaged with other children for very long but move from interaction to interaction more

frequently than do other children (Ladd, 1983). Therefore, according to these findings, rejected children's feelings of loneliness stem from their social behaviour problems. Other studies (Dodge, 1983, Gottman, Gonso, & Rasmussen, 1975) imply that problems lie not only in the behaviour of rejected children, but also in the way that their peers behave toward them (i.e. rejected children receive fewer positive initiations and more negative treatments from peers).

Studies examining loneliness scores as a function of children's sociometric status (Asher & Parker, 1989; Cassidy & Asher, 1992) indicate that rejected children more often than children in other status groups report being lonely and isolated. The results also indicate that low-accepted children were more lonely than average- or high-accepted children, and that average-accepted and high-accepted children did not differ significantly.

Although significant and helpful in the delimitation of the area of study, these findings have reduced the complex phenomenon of children's loneliness to being merely a social deficit problem. Even some of the findings from formal assessments of children's loneliness have shown that children's loneliness is not always directly related to children's social deficit. Not all unpopular children report feeling lonely and some well-accepted children do feel lonely (Asher et al., 1990). Moreover, neglected children who also are not well integrated in the peer group report being lonely not significantly more often than average-status children report. In the literature (Asher et al., 1990), the variability in loneliness among rejected children is associated with several compatible with other factors, including variability in the degree of rejection experienced by unpopular children, variability in the chronicity of rejected status in the peer group, the presence of a friend in the class, differences in behavioral style, and differences in the attributions children make about their social successes and failures.

It is my belief that a combination among these, and perhaps some other factors results in the uniqueness of each child's loneliness feelings. Formal assessment, however, cannot provide insights into nor understanding of children's subjective experience. If the research on children's loneliness does not go beyond the simplistic understanding of loneliness as a social deficit, the understanding of what the experience of loneliness in its richness and complexity is like for children will be impossible.

Children's Self-Perception of Feeling Lonely

Research and intervention focusing on children's self-perceptions of feeling lonely is a fairly recent area of inquiry (Asher et al., 1990). Cassidy and Asher (1992) suggest that feelings of loneliness in kindergarten and first grade cohere with perceptions of having few friends, being socially incompetent, and not having basic friendship needs satisfied. The research oriented to children's perception of feeling lonely is also concerned about the contributions that the family might make to children's feelings of loneliness. The assumptions are based on attachment

theory and suggest that secure parent-child relationships influence how children interact with and react to their parents and peers. Insecurely attached children are more likely to avoid or resist their parents, and are more likely to be rejected by their peers which in turn, as noted elsewhere (Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Cassidy & Asher, 1992), results in their reporting higher level of loneliness and social dissatisfaction than their better-liked peers.

There are very few studies based on interviews with children, but they indicate children's understanding of loneliness. Hayden (1988) interviewed third-through eighth-grade children about their knowledge of loneliness and described the dimensions based on their understanding and responses. According to the study-findings, the affect dimension suggests that children understand that loneliness is related to emotions. Children described loneliness in terms of: "feeling left out," "sadness," and "being left alone" (Hayden et al., 1988, cited in Bullock, 1993, p. 47). The cognitive dimension suggests children's understanding of dissatisfaction with peer relationships. Children mentioned such aspects as, "not being able to play with or talk to anyone," and "nobody to share your private thoughts with." More recently, Cassidy and Asher (1992) have reported on kindergarten and first-grade children's knowledge of loneliness. Children's responses to the questions regarding what loneliness is ("being sad and alone"), where it comes from ("nobody to play with"), and what one might do to overcome feelings of loneliness ("find a friend") (Cassidy & Asher, 1992, p. 355), suggest that children's conception of loneliness is similar to that of adults.

Several questions have emerged from the research based on interviews with children. Although these studies are an attempt to uncover what is the meaning of loneliness for young children, the employment of the "loneliness and dissatisfaction questionnaire" (Cassidy & Asher, 1992, p. 352) limited the option to examine the real phenomenon. The question "what is the meaning of children's affirmative responses to the questionnaire?" remains open. Does children's knowledge of the meaning of the word 'lonely' indicate that they had the experience? Isn't it possible to 'make' children feel lonely by attaching the term 'lonely' to children's perhaps 'indefinable feelings'? What makes it possible for a child to feel lonely?

It is my conviction that it is impossible to better understand the phenomenon of children's loneliness if we do not first attempt to understand how the development of the self makes the awareness of loneliness possible. In other words, we cannot really understand the phenomenon of loneliness if we only look at it in the realm of intersubjectivity. We need to understand what the consciousness must be like in order for loneliness to be manifested within the mind.

The Development of the Self and the Possibility of Loneliness

Although some psychological, social and/or cultural conditions and practices which affect

the possibility for the child to feel lonely are unquestionable, to really address the phenomenon of children's loneliness it is necessary to consider certain assumptions about the self (or the ego) without which the very idea of children's loneliness would be impossible.

Such assumptions, from a philosophical point of view, are offered by Mijuskovic (1984). His inquiry of the question of the possibility of existence loneliness feeling is based on the understanding of the development of human consciousness from the "oceanic feeling" of the self to "self-consciousness." Freud's description of the "oceanic feeling" as akin to a "sensation of eternity," "limitless and unbounded," is seen as a feeling grounded in the most primitive stage of awareness of the undifferentiated ego. This "oceanic feeling" is the sensation that the ego originally feels as it experiences itself as a perfect unity with the entire universe, "a fusion which excludes any and all distinctions between self and the world" (Mijuskovic, 1984. p. 191). He argues that this "oceanic feeling" is actually a sensation of nothingness which, however, is immediately invaded by the plentitude of "material" or sensory as soon as consciousness awakens. The self, in this initial stage, is conscious but not yet self-conscious.

Fihte (cited in Mijuskovic, 1984, p. 194) theorized that when the Ego is first conscious-it posits itself-but is not aware of itself as such, it is not reflexively conscious. It next posits a non-Ego, an-other-than-itself as a condition of its own recognition, its own self-conscious awareness. Mijuskovic discusses that according to Hegel, the "other," which mutually conditions the self, is itself a consciousness. Thus consciousness of self is only possible through the existence of other self-consciousness. Mijuskovic (1984) concludes that

> First there is simply consciousness, an unreflective identification of the ego with the totality of presented being. Slowly, however, with the realization that our desires are not omnipotent, that we are finite and limited, the ego introduces the reality principle, it generates a distinction between itself and the other-than-itself (Hegel's principle of negativity). This is "healthy" and necessary. It leads to the beginning of a "realistic" separation between (a) a reflexive self; (b) inanimate objects; and (c) other selves, most notably the mother. (p. 194-195)

This is an important insight from the point of view of the possibility of the appearance of loneliness feelings. It seems that the distinction between the self and the other-than-self, opens up the possibility of loneliness feeling since on the one hand, the self needs to be distinct, and on the other hand, the self needs to belong with others in order to become mutually conditioned by them. But this is just a possibility. For this possibility to "materialize," one needs first to <u>experience</u> a sense of self, or to <u>experience</u> one's personal identity. What does it mean to experience a sense of self or a personal identity?

Pre-Identity, Self Differentiation and Possibility of Loneliness

Van Manen and Levering (1996) suggest that from the point of view of everyday experience,

identity seems to emerge in concrete situations with others as a kind of immanent self-knowledge. But how does the child move from the state of the "oceanic feeling" or pre-identity to a differentiated sense of self from others and from its own self? Merleau-Ponty (1964) points out that this differentiation first take place at the level of body awareness.

> I gradually become aware of my body, of what radically distinguishes it from the other's body, at the same time that I begin to live my intentions in the facial expressions of the other and likewise begin to live the other's volitions in my own gestures. The progress of the child's experience results in his seeing that his body is, after all, closed in on itself. In particular, the visual image he acquires of his own body (especially from the mirror) reveals to him a hitherto unsuspected isolation of two subjects who are facing each other. The objectification of his body discloses to the child his difference, his 'insularity,' and, correlatively, that of others. (p. 119)

Further, Merleau-Ponty suggests, the child's initial body awareness is introspective; the child's 'I' is a subjectively felt body. In the stage of introceptivity, even the bodies of others are less extroceptively "seen" by the child than experienced introceptively as something missing.

> When, for example, the child is seen to cry because someone goes away [it is because] he has an 'impression of incompleteness.' Rather than truly perceiving those who are there, he feels incomplete when someone goes away. This negative experience does not mean that there is a precise perception of the other qua other in the preceding moment. The first external contact with others can be truly given only through extroceptivity. (p. 124)

When someone goes away, the child's "impression of incompleteness" reflects the literal change in the experience of his or her body. If during the first stage of the child's self differentiation the child experiences the bodies of the others introceptively rather than extroceptively, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, then the physical absence of the body of the other changes the experience of the child's own body. When someone leaves the room his or her body, which is experienced as a part of the child's own body, is taken away from the child's body. The child therefore feels robbed of his or her own body--the body that the child experienced in the presence of the other. Van Manen and Levering (1996), however, insist that introceptivity is not just a primitive state of the self and adults also can experience this sense of incompleteness when robbed of someone's presence. This is a very important statement in regard to the question of the possibility of loneliness feeling. From this point of view, the possibility of loneliness feeling as incompleteness is open on the first stage of self differentiation--the body awareness. Naturally, this is not to say that the child experiences this sense of incompleteness as a loneliness feeling. This first sense of incompleteness just opens up the possibility of loneliness to arise later in the child's development, even if the child is still not yet conscious of its existence. The development of the child's more complicated

introceptive awareness (because of the more developed sense of self-reflectivity) expands the possibility of experiencing this sense of incompleteness as a loneliness feeling. It is important to stress, however, that the child's loneliness feeling as incompleteness in his or her later development is not seen as an impairment or as the child's inability to differentiate his or her self from that of his or her mother or other significant family members. The possibility for the child to experience loneliness as incompleteness does not imply that for the child to feel whole or complete he or she will permanently need someone, whose constant presence, however, may or may not fit the demi-role precisely. But the possibility for the child to experience loneliness as incompleteness does imply that the child's experience of the self and its dwelling in his or her personal world changes when the child feels robbed of someone's presence. Hence, from this point of view, loneliness feeling as incompleteness is not seen as pathological loneliness, but as one possible mode of existence of the loneliness feeling.

Acquisition of Specular Image and Possibility of Loneliness

The discovery of body-difference makes possible for the growing child to explore his or her inwardness. The child's body awareness, which at the beginning is introceptive, gradually and fragmentarily becomes extroceptive as the child, at about six months of age, begins to explore one hand with the other. The transformation of the child's body awareness from introceptive to extroceptive makes possible the first real external contact with others. The first beginnings of an observation of others consist in fixations on the parts of the body which enriches the perception that the child can have of his or her own body. This process prepares the child to encounter his or her own image in the mirror. The alienation of the body image from the introceptive body is an necessary experience in the formation of identity. By means of the image in the mirror, the child becomes capable of being a spectator of himself or herself. Through the acquisition of the specular image the child notices that he or she is visible for himself or herself and for the others. "The passage from the introceptive me to the 'specular I', is the passage from one form or state of personality to another" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 136). The alienation of the body image from the introceptive body is the basis of the feeling of the self in its "this-ness" in a given situation which, as Buytendijk (1950) suggests, is the most profound basis for the phenomenon of feeling. Thus for a feeling to become possible, the self needs to find itself as a subject, standing apart and "view" itself in the situation in which it is involved. From this point of view, the possibility of feeling lies in the ability of the self to "see" itself. But according to Merleau-Ponty (1964) "there is a conflict between the me as I feel myself and the me as I see myself or as others see me" (p. 137). This conflict gradually leads the child to the realization that others can have only an exterior image of him or her, which is analogous to the one seen in the mirror. It is not the self as it is felt by the child that the others can

perceive, it is only the image of the child's self that others, like the mirror, can capture. The mirror, therefore, prepares the child not only for the alienation of the body image from the introceptive body, but also for the alienation by others. Thus, the child feels, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, that the others will "tear me away from my immediate inwardness much more surely then will the mirror" (p. 136). The mirror image which, on the one hand, makes possible the contemplation of self and, on the other hand, the alienation of the self and of others. This is the next step towards the possibility of the child's experience of loneliness feeling. The loneliness feeling becomes possible since the phenomenon of the specular image reveals to the child for the first time a new mode of relatedness not only to the others, but to the self. The visual experience of the self which opens up the possibility of an attitude of self-observation as different from others.

Narcissism and Possibility of Loneliness

Merleau-Ponty (1964) suggests that the possibility of self-observation, will develop subsequently in the form of narcissism. Its roots are in the child's realization that the specular image reflects his or her unique individually. The specular image has a de-realizing function in a sense that it turns the child away from what he or she effectively is in order to orient the child toward what he or she sees to be. "And the more sharply etched and determined our image is, the more it stands in stark alienation and opposition to the 'other'" ((Mijuskovic, 1979, p. 63). Narcissism, therefore, is possible when the separation between the self and the other is accomplished. Narcissism, at its later and higher level is an explicit, self-conscious unity in contradiction to the non-conscious unified totality of undifferentiated self. In this process of transition from undifferentiated to differentiated consciousness, the self plays an active role--it actively separates itself from the rest of immediately present consciousness beings by determining itself in opposition to them. The phenomenon of loneliness, then, arises, as Mijuskovic (1979) suggests from the intrinsic paradox of human existence; the growing awareness of the self and its direct conflict with the rest of reality leads to the self's longing for reunification with its primeval condition of conscious/existence. But the reverse process is impossible because the reunification would mean that the self would have to loose and negate the achievements it gained from the external world--its special particularity, its vital identity and self-consciousness. The ego is alone and it both feels and knows it, states Mijuskovic. The conflict between the self's awareness of its aloneness and its longing for reunification is resolved in a compromise; to master its sense of identity, the self not only will need the others, but it will force, if it is necessary, the others to recognize its desires. To master his or her sense of identity, the child needs the other, in most cases the mother, to aid his or her ego toward an awareness of itself. According to Zilboorg (1938), pathological loneliness stems directly from an

exaggerated form of aggressive narcissism.

> And if the omnipotent baby learns the joy of being admired and loved but learns nothing about the outside world, he may develop a conviction of his greatness and all-importance which will lead to a narcissistic orientation to life - a conviction that life is nothing but being loved and admired. This narcissistic-megalomanic attitude will not be acceptable to the environment, which will respond with hostility and isolation of the narcissistic person. (p. 53)

Mijuskovic (1978), however, states that narcissistic loneliness is a universal and necessary structure in all human consciousness, and that narcissism is not abandoned in later development because it is the essential condition of being human. Thus, from this point of view, the possibility of existence of narcissistic loneliness as a mode of existence of loneliness feeling is never closed. The self always needs the other who is vitally important to the formation and preservation of the self. The presence of the other not only provides a context of "reflection" and re-cognition for the self, but it also serves as a guarantee that the self is not abandoned, alone, in a foreign realm of being.

Syncretic Sociability and Possibility of Loneliness

The acquisition of a specular image bears, as Merleau-Ponty points out, the child's "relations of being, with the world and with others" (1964, p. 137). The child's new relations of being with the world and with the others manifest themselves in a sharp increase in the quantity and quality of these relations, a phase known as "syncretic sociability." But what is also distinctive for this phase is that the child confuses himself or herself with the situation or with the role in which he or she might find himself or herself engaged. The indistinction of two personalities, or attributing to others what belongs to the child himself or herself, is called "transitivism." The confusion between the self and the other not only makes transitivism possible, but also the feeling of jealousy. Merleau-Ponty says that for the child "jealousy represents a stage wherein he participates in a total affective situation and sense the complementary life of his own without yet knowing how to isolate or affirm his own" (p. 144). Thus the child defines himself or herself entirely in relation to others and by the lack of what the others have. What is essential to jealousy is the feeling of privation, frustration, or exclusion. This is a very insightful statement with respect to the possibility of loneliness feeling. It implies that the child can feel outside, or excluded from a group of children even before he or she can have a sense of belonging to the group. The feeling of jealousy as exclusion or deprivation opens up the possibility of loneliness feeling as deprivation and/or exclusion in the child's later development. This possibility is illustrated in Merleau-Ponty's analysis of Proust's childhood memories of his own feelings of exclusion from the group of children to which his friend, but not Proust himself belong. Merleau-Ponty suggests that Proust's feeling of love was at first the feeling of being excluded,

and that it was not so much that Proust found his friend lovable as it was that he felt himself outside the group of children. Thus we can view the child's loneliness feeling as deprivation and/or exclusion not simply as a result of social isolation or lack of friends (Rubin, 1982) but also as an inherent part of the child's identification with a seen spectacle. It is possible to make such a statement since the state of indistinction from others, the mutual impingement of the other and oneself at the heart of a situation in which one is confused, and the presence of the same subject in several roles, does not disappear in later childhood and even in adulthood.

> The crisis at three years pushes syncretism farther away rather than suppressing it altogether.... The indistinction between me and the other does not inevitably reappear except in certain situations that for the adult are limiting situations but are quite important in his life. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 154)

As Merleau-Ponty points out, although transitivism is surpassed in the immediate daily life, it is never surpassed in the realm of feeling. Every intimate relationship is inevitably an entrance into an undivided situation with another. And every genuine experience of the other is necessarily an alienating one, in the sense that it tears one away from one's lone self and creates instead a mixture of oneself and the other. All relations with the others, if deep enough, bring about a state of insecurity which opens up the possibility of loneliness feeling.

Summary of the Developmental Perspective on Loneliness

It appears that the very idea of the possibility of loneliness is tied up not only with the development of the different aspects of the relations between the self and the others, but also within the development of the self. The development of the self also poses the question about the relation between the different senses of self--changing self (or plurality of "selves" depending on the other people around the self), and self-identity or self-sameness. These two senses of self-identity are united in Ricoeur's notion of narration (cited in van Manen & Levering, 1996). According to his viewpoint, the identity of a person lies in the story that self narrates. The self is involved in constant re-categorization of its identity (the biographic self seeking a sense of order or unity) or re-interpretation of the past (the narrative self reinterpreting memory of itself through creative imagination such as through story). In regard to the question of the possibility of loneliness, the starting point of such story is essential.

If the story begins with the envision that the infant's self is part of a symbiotic mass, physically separated but still psychologically merged, then the development of the self would become a story of separation from the primordial fusion with otherness, of firming boundaries, of detaching, of learning to do for oneself which leads to greater and deeper self-awareness. The self, therefore, would increasingly become more aware of its separateness, aloneness, and it would be more vulnerable to loneliness feeling.

If the story begins with the envision that the infants are born separated and alone, disconnected and helpless, then the development of the self would become a story of learning to attach, to connect, to find ways to meet one's complex needs for contacts with the others. The developing self, therefore, would gradually learn how to live in greater and more differentiated connection to others, its interactions with them would become much more multifaceted, and it would be less vulnerable to loneliness feeling.

It is also possible, however, that in the self's development separation from and relatedness with others are recursive, interpenetrating processes as Josselson's (1992) suggests.

> Separation from others firms the self, makes boundaries palpable, and allows for greater differentiation of self from others. And these factors produce greater responsiveness in relationships. (p. 19)

In other words, for the selves to really experience themselves as being connected, they need first to experience their selves as separated. And yet, when the developing self is reflexively aware of its separation from others, the possibility of loneliness feeling is open. In saying so, I do not imply that the developing self is reflectively conscious of the experience. In its most basic form as Dilthey (1985) points out, lived experience involves our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life: a reflexive or self-given awareness which is, as awareness, unaware of itself. And only in thought does it become objective.

Conclusions

A number of prevailing assumptions regarding loneliness have been identified in the research literature. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Loneliness is a result of deficiencies in a person's social relationships (the term "social" in this context denotes that loneliness is due to a relational deficit to others-whether those others be intimate others, or simply a social network).
2. Loneliness is a response to the absence of a particular type of relationship. Loneliness is originated from six types of deficits: attachments, social integration, opportunity for nurture, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, and guidance.
3. There are two distinct types of loneliness: emotional loneliness (related to the absence or loss of attachment figure), and loneliness of social isolation (related to the absence of community of friends).
4. Loneliness is affected by the match or mismatch between one's social needs, desires, or skills and the perceived realities of one's social environment.
5. Loneliness is a subjective experience (one can be lonely in a crowd, and not lonely on a deserted island). Loneliness is a result of an internal event within the individual.
6. The capacities for loneliness conceptualization are age-related. Children as young as the

preschool age already have fairly well-developed concepts of loneliness.

7. Primary factors may predispose children to the loneliness experience, and secondary self-related or situational variables may maintain or reinforce it. These factors may include the extent to which the child fails to develop meaningful relations, to bridge social or interpersonal space, and to cope with feelings of being alienated from others in their immediate social environment.

8. The experience of loneliness is unpleasant and distressing. The experience of loneliness is similar to other negative affective states such as depression or anxiety. It has not been shown that loneliness is related to one unique set of emotions.

Existing perspectives clearly contribute to the basic knowledge of loneliness. However, it is fair to say that to date, loneliness has been widely understood by researchers as mainly a social deficit problem. The existing premises accepted by the majority of those researching loneliness are essentially inadequate and do not get to the true nature of the experience of loneliness. This inadequacy can be related both to the lack of sufficient theoretical understanding of loneliness, and the narrowness of research methodology in loneliness. As a result, research and the generation of theory has been limited in respect to the elaboration and exploration of meaning issues. In order to reach a deeper understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon of loneliness we need to study the experience as it is lived and not to try to divide the experience and the experiencing person into convenient research domains. Yet very few research efforts have taken this perspective. The investigation of the phenomenon of children's loneliness from the perspective of meaning is thus the central aim of the present study.

CHAPTER 2
A WAY TO UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S LONELINESS

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Human Experience

The hermeneutic phenomenological approach to studying human experience is based on description and interpretation. From this perspective, the way of understanding the phenomenon of children's loneliness starts from its description and not from its definition as a logical concept. Furthermore, understanding real phenomenon like loneliness is

> unlikely to occur through the analysis of aggregated data collected from people trying to fit their experiences into the categories created by our data collection instruments. Paper-and-pencil measures of loneliness and related phenomena are crude reflections of a feeling or experience. (Stokes, 1989, p. 59)

Phenomenology is a tradition emphasizing the descriptive study of lived experience (Giorgi, 1985). It is oriented around the question, "What is this particular experience like?" (van Manen, 1990). A phenomenological approach begins not in the abstract world of theory and concept, but in the lifehood, the pre-reflective world of spontaneous, everyday living. Thus it seems that the phenomenological method is especially well suited to studying human relations and feelings, in contrast to the predominant natural science perspective of Western psychology which aims to predict and control human conduct. As Stokes (1989) points out, psychology generally defines good research as research that involves the thorough analysis of quantifiable data collected on instruments with demonstrated psychometric properties. Typically, the studies on loneliness focus on methodological refinement, on correcting methodological flows in prior research. Thus the emphasis is not on the nature of the real phenomenon of interest but on quantifiable data and causal relationships. The bias against the need for descriptive, phenomenological research is critically discussed by Day (1969). He points out that phenomenological research is seen as not needed "except in those areas where we already have considerable knowledge and consequently need research the least" (p. 328), but that we have to recognize that direct observation and simple description of phenomena are valuable methods for generating knowledge. Van Manen (1990) states that while the traditional, hypothesizing, or experimental research is largely interested in knowledge that is generalizable, true for one and all, phenomenology, in contrast is a philosophy or theory of the unique; it is interested in what is essentially not replaceable. Thus, he says, "from phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (p. 5).

As noticed earlier, it is agreed among different approaches toward defining loneliness that it

is a subjective experience. Yet, in the loneliness research, all different, unique experiences of loneliness are somehow unified so the ultimate "cure" could be found. As shown in Chapter 1, current models of loneliness tend to yield a liner understanding, and are impoverished of human meaning. A humanistic understanding of loneliness which integrates person, context and experience is required. Human science is concerned with questions of meaning so as to understand the significance of experience, and this makes it the most suitable paradigm for studying the phenomenon of children's loneliness and its role in children's lives. To attempt to study the phenomenon of children's loneliness from hermeneutic phenomenological perspective means to aim at uncovering and disclosing the essence of children's experiences of loneliness, its essential structure which makes it a distinct experience. This structure or "structural nexus" (Dilthey, 1985) belongs to a particular lived experience as a pattern or unit of meaning which is a part of a system of contextually related experiences. The essential structure of the experience is composed of the most basic and invariant constituents of that experience, which Giorgi (1985) calls themes. A theme is a phrase or statement that captures a meaning in the flow of experience (van Manen, 1990). A theme is a way of summarizing, of structuring an experience, so the meaning can be understood.

Lived experience, hence, is the starting point and the end point of phenomenological research (van Manen, 1990). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of any experience we must turn to the lived experience which refers to our everyday experiencing, as we live it through in the here and now moments of the lifeworld.

> The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. XX)

Lifeworld as it is lived, therefore, is a complex unit of experiences and the meaning of the experience of research interest lies in its complexity. In other words, the phenomenological method does not aim to "isolate" the phenomenon in order to study it, but rather it aims to uncover its meaning as a "unity of a significant whole" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 60). This, however, does not mean that the phenomenological question loses its focus. The genuine phenomenological question focuses on the nature of the experience being investigated in order to uncover the identity of the phenomenon.

Van Manen (1990) points out that there is a general agreement that lived experience has a temporal structure that it can never be grasped in its immediate manifestation but only reflectively as past presence. Thus lived experience is only available retrospectively to the researcher. Lived experience, as Dilthey (1985) states, becomes objective only in thought.

Lived experiences gather hermeneutic significance as we reflectively gather them by giving memory to them (van Manen, 1990). Through interpretive acts, through the process of phenomenological reduction, the researcher assigns meanings to the phenomenon of lived life. But to "thematize" these implicit meanings, the researcher first needs to collect many concrete examples of the experience of interest as it is lived by the persons who experienced it.

Phenomenology has been called a science of examples (van Manen, 1990). While it is concerned with the most invariant structure of an experience, it does so through exploration of the particular and unique. But to do phenomenological research, it is not enough to simply recall experiences as I or other people may have had in respect to a particular phenomenon. It is agreed that any experiential accounts or lived-experience descriptions are never identical to lived experience itself because any attempt to capture the experience is already a transformation of it.

> The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence-in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (van Manen, 1990, p. 36)

Thus, the quality of a hermeneutic phenomenological work derives not simply from method, but from the power and richness with which it enables us to encounter the lived essence of an experience while realizing that "meanings we bring to the surface from the depths of life's ocean have already lost the natural quiver of their undisturbed existence" (van Manen, 1990, p. 54).

Personal Experience as a Starting Point

Willis (1991) suggests that phenomenological states "are known through direct evidence of one's own primary experience and indirect evidence of primary experiences of others" (p. 178). Van Manen (1990), however, makes it clear that one's own life experience would not be of much value to a phenomenologist if one's own experience is not seen also as a possible experience of others. As a preparation for the present study, I tried to describe my own childhood experience of loneliness as much as possible in experiential terms, without offering causal explanations or interpretive generalizations of my experience, as Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests. This experience of reflecting upon my childhood experience of feeling lonely while waiting for my mother to come home from work gave me an opportunity to recall how the world looked through my eyes--the eyes of a six-year-old child, and how the experience of loneliness looked for me then. Of course, my own childhood experience of loneliness is just one possible experience of loneliness, and yet, as a possible childhood experience, it became

feasible for me to grasp how this particular experience transformed my entire lifeworld. But is this loneliness? In what sense is my particular experience an example of children's feelings of loneliness? How are young children's experiences of loneliness different? Or are they similar? What is the meaning of loneliness in children's lives?

Van Manen (1990) points out that it is to the extent that my experiences could be our experiences that the phenomenologist wants to be reflectively aware of certain experiential meanings. In actual phenomenological descriptions the authors use "I" and "we" interchangeably to emphasize that one's own experiences are the possible experiences of others as much as the others are the possible experiences of oneself. Thus the "we" used throughout the thesis is used not to imply an absolute universality of the particular experience described, but to invite the reader into these descriptions of loneliness.

Descriptions from Others

In this study, descriptions from others have been used to disclose themes. These descriptions formed the foundation from which interpretations have been drawn. These collected descriptions of children's lived experiences allowed me to become more experienced myself, to become more able to understand the deeper meaning of loneliness in the context of children's lives.

As a preparation for the research conversations with elementary school children about their experiences of loneliness, I invited my son to recall his experiences of going to school in France and in Canada when he was still unable to speak the language. I begged him to describe his feelings during his first weeks at school. I was deeply moved by his recollections. I saw my own child's vulnerability and frustration in a new light. I felt his desperate loneliness, his sense of complete isolation in the midst of a group of strangers. His everyday plea "Mom, please be first when it's time for going home" suddenly took on new meaning for me.

In listening not only to my son's stories, but also to many other elementary school children's stories about their experiences of loneliness, I realized that the essence of their stories came through single words, phrases and sentences, as much as through sighs and pauses. Sighs and pauses that children made sharpened my awareness of their words and of the lived meaning of those words for them. This realization brought up the issue of relationship of language and meaning. Lived experience, says van Manen (1990), is soaked through with language; it is recalled and reflected on thanks to language (p. 38). Merleau-Ponty (1964, 1968, 1973), Heidegger (1962, 1964, 1971) who have looked at language from a phenomenological perspective proposed that humankind has an immediate presence in the world and that language is one way of being-in-the-world. Heidegger (1971) also proposed that language, being so fundamentally part of our humanness, is one with thinking and being. "Language is

the house of Being," says Heidegger (1971, p. 135), since language (Sprache) is one form of discourse (Rede), discourse being a feature of being human and our acquaintance with the world (Schmitt, 1969, p. 100). Thus, lived experience itself seems to be inseparable from its linguistic structure. Experience and (un)consciousness are structured like a language, and, according to Ricoeur (1981) one could speak of all experiences, all human interactions, as some kind of text. Wittgenstein (1953) introduced the concept of language games as a way of opening up for exploration the web of relationships between meaning and the lived, and living experience of language in use. Words that are spoken in everyday situations are taken as the beginning point for research into the meaning we construct as we dwell in the world. Language, as a "form of life" is not viewed as a system of sentences or forms of utterance, but rather as a property of speakers. Wittgenstein profoundly believed that language is not systematically describable in terms of formal categories (it is not a calculus), and that categories which seem appropriate (language games) are categories of what speakers do when they use language. Thus language is seen to be in the world as well as about the world. These perspectives served as a foundation in the interpretation of the main themes which emerged from the study.

Descriptions of the meaning of children's loneliness can be gleaned not only through conversations with children, but also from existing descriptions of loneliness in academic literature, novels, and poetry. As Parkinson (1977) points out, "In a sense the only subject of poetry [and literature] is human loneliness" (p. 18), since art always consists of expressing "the basic reality of human loneliness" (p. 8). Poets and novelists such as Rilke, Joyce, Proust, Eliot and others have disclosed in a deep and insightful way human loneliness. I was, however, cautious not to take for granted their uncoverings and to implement them to the interpretation of children's loneliness feelings, but rather to use them as an occasion to reflect on the phenomenon of children's loneliness.

Conducting the Study

Ethical Considerations

Since children's descriptions of their experiences of loneliness inevitably contain self-disclosure, ethical considerations were required in the study.

Prior to the collection of data, the study received approval from the Ethics Committee in the Department of Elementary Education, and the Edmonton Public School Board. The consent form (see Appendix A) which detailed issues such as voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, confidentiality, and possible risks was sent to the parents and/or guardians of the children from the elementary school in which I was given permission from the Edmonton Public School Board to conduct the research.

In order to facilitate my conversations with the children about their feelings of loneliness, I developed and designed an original interpersonal communication board game entitled "How do they feel?" The age and content appropriateness of the game was tested prior to the study in the "Child Study Centre," Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta.

All names in the study were changed. All tapes were transcribed by me and will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

The Participants

The participants of this study were seventy five elementary school children from kindergarten to grade six. I did not "select" the participants prior to the study. I was not looking to find rejected or isolated children, or children who have just come to the school. My conviction that loneliness is among the most common human experience resulted in the decision to talk to all students that I have obtained the permission from their parents and/or guardians. I did not "select" the participants, but I very carefully selected the school in which the study was conducted. Given the personal and sensitive nature of the experience of loneliness, I anticipated that if children's parents and/or guardians did not know me personally, they would be sceptical about my ability to handle such conversations because of my foreign accent. More important for me, however, was my own scepticism in respect not only to my accent, but to the children's willingness to talk to me about their experiences of loneliness if I were a complete stranger to them. Considering all these potential obstacles, I came to the conclusion that the only school where I would not have these problems was a school in my neighbourhood. I have been involved in various volunteer activities in the school over the past four years and most of the children and the parents (except for those who were new in the school) were familiar with me. Many parents, however, who wanted to talk to me prior to giving their permission requested the conversations to be limited to their children's school experiences of feeling lonely. Of course, I respected their request and assured them that with their children the conversation would be around the question: "Have you ever felt lonely at school?"

It seemed that I was "ready" to start the research, but I did not feel ready since I had not yet solved the main problems. I was still asking "How do I approach the children?", "How do I initiate the conversation in such a way that my interest in their loneliness feelings would not seem 'suspicious' to them?" The difficulties that I was facing were based on the available evidence in the literature on loneliness which suggest that "lonely people are reluctant to disclose their condition" and that "loneliness is more often discussed with family and friends than with helping professionals" (Perlman & Joshi, 1989, p. 63). As a human science researcher, I was fully aware of the need to enter children's lifeworlds in order to collect the

experiential material, but I needed to find the "door."

Close Observation

Van Manen suggests that "The best way to enter a person's lifeworld is to participate in it" (1990, p. 69). It is well known that play is central to young children's lifeworld. For the purpose of the study, however, the play was important not only as an essential means for children's development, but most of all because it requires and creates a sense of togetherness. So to gain access to the experience of young children, I had to get myself involved in a play activity where I could talk to them while remaining attentively aware of the way it was for children. I was, however, fully conscious that my involvement in children's play as a form of close observation was only the first step toward my conversations with the children. This first step allowed me to generate experiential anecdotes which were the foundation of our following up conversations. It also allowed me to fully realize the importance of the play situation, for the children and for me, in the process of establishing a close relationship--a relationship that could make it possible for us to be engaged in a conversational interviewing process. So I have found the "door" to enter the lifeworld of these children. I came up with the idea of developing a board game with which to generate a genuine play situation as a beginning of our conversations.

The "Feeling Game"

Developing a game is a rather difficult task and I would not have undertaken it if I had not had previous experience in this particular field in Bulgaria. Moreover, this game had to have a particular content and rules so it could serve as a means for me to get access to children's experiences of loneliness. Communication boardgames have been broadly used in analytic child psychotherapy especially for those children who find it difficult to respond to traditional approaches that require self-disclosing to the therapist. It is widely agreed that even the most reticent and negative child will usually play a game with the therapist, since such play is not viewed as being self-disclosing by the child, and is usually seen as more pleasant than receiving direct confrontation from the therapist (Frey, 1986). Although the game that I developed was a type of a interpersonal communication game, it has not been designed to serve as a therapeutic means. Its content only had to orient children towards verbal expression of their feelings, and thus to facilitate the conversation with the child. The name of the game ("How do they feel?") was chosen to point to the child, from the very beginning, the thematic content of the game. The game includes 1 game board (see Appendix B), 4 game markers (different colours), and 40 game cards which contain concise description of situations in a variety of school contexts. (see Appendix C). The game is appropriate for children in kindergarten to grade four. In creating the game, the decision was made to use single printed

words as prompts that aid children to identify the feelings of the person involved in a given situation (in the process of the game-playing activity), and assist the storytelling process (after the game-playing activity is completed). The words that were chosen were: proud, bored, sad, happy, angry, and lonely. Except for "proud" and "happy," all other words were not simply "feeling words" but they could be used by children interchangeably as children "name" the feeling that a person has in a given situation. Thus, on one hand children had the opportunity to choose (according to their own experience and feelings) what word is the most pertinent to the person's feeling in that particular situation, and on the other hand I had the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the choice made by children.

The four-step game-playing procedure consists of **Step 1**: reading out loud by the child or me of the words on the board. This step varied depending on the child's age and level of reading skills. **Step 2**: having read the words out loud the child next is required to say something that she or he knows about every word on the board. **Step 3**: the players take turns in responding to the situation described on the card(s). This step also varied depending on the child's age and level of reading skills. Having chosen one of the "feeling words" on the board, the player moved his or her marker to this spot on the board which had the same word and the same colour on it. The player whose marker reached on the "End" position first would win. **Step 4**: required the player to chose one of the words on the board and to tell a story about it. The winner told the story first.

For the purpose of the study, the order of the cards was prearranged so the child could be the winner and therefore to be the first one to tell a story. If the child did not choose the word "lonely" to tell a story (which happened almost always), I invited the child to remember such an experience and tell me about when she or he felt lonely. The transition between talking about other people's feelings and one's own was so smooth that the children responded openly and willingly to all my further questions so the "story telling" gradually became a conversation.

The Conversations

Conversations with all participants were conducted in a small office which the principal of the school had kindly provided for this particular purpose. The office was in the school building so the younger children, especially those who were new in the school and did not know me well enough, felt secure in an familiar environment. The location of the office also provided a quiet atmosphere in which the conversations were carried on without any disturbances. Prior to the conversations with children from kindergarten to grade four, I visited the class and in an appropriate moment I proposed to sit in a circle on the floor. I told the children that I would like to hear from every one of them what are they very good at doing. After the children (and the teacher) it was my turn. I showed the children a toy-caterpillar which I made for my son's

fourth birthday, and I let them hold it for a while. During this time I told the children that my profession in Bulgaria was to create toys for children and that I just made up a game which is for two players. I asked them: "Who wants to come and try out this game with me?" It was not surprising that everybody wanted to come with me. I had to explain that they all would take turns and that not everyone could play in one day. So I invited the children, one at a time, to come to the office to play the game with me. Of course, the conversations were conducted only with the children for whom I had obtained a permission.

Conversations with the children from grades five and six (a combined class) were processed differently. The "feeling game" was inappropriate for their age, and could not serve as a means to generate descriptions of their experiences of loneliness. So I was facing again the problem how to initiate the conversations with these children. After talking to their teacher, I decided that it would be suitable to invite the children to write descriptions of their experiences of loneliness. The participants were informed of study objectives and were instructed in regard to how to describe the experience (see Appendix D) as a group. The participants were asked to describe their particular experiences of loneliness in their own way. After the initial instruction, the children were given one week to write (at school or at home, at their choice). They were assured of confidentiality of the information. The participants were also encouraged to ask me questions at any time they needed further clarification. The written descriptions were the foundation of our follow up conversations which took place in the office.

Since self is used as instrument in this research project, the attitude and preparation I took into the project were of greatest importance. It helped me to establish an atmosphere of safety and trust in which the participants and I, as a researcher, felt connected in the conversation so that there was a rich and open recollection of the experience. I tried to keep my stance as open as possible, but I have to admit that it was not an easy task. As Becker (1986) notes, the demands placed upon the researcher are rather paradoxical, in that the encounter requires that the person be well-prepared yet receptive, task-oriented yet amiable, and knowledgable yet naive.

All the conversations were audiotaped with the permission not only of the children's parents and/or guardians, but with the verbal permission of the children themselves. I had only one conversation with each participant because by the end of each conversation the participant and I felt that the discussion was sufficiently exhaustive. All the tapes were transcribed by me and then will be destroyed.

I kept a research journal in which nonverbal observations and impressions were recorded, both immediately following each conversation and at later times (Kvale, 1983). Journal writing enhanced reflection on conversations while the experience was fresh. The research journal also

served as an ongoing repository for ideas and comments during the extensive analyzing, reading and writing process.

Uncovering Thematic Aspects in the Descriptions

I have transcribed and reproduced the conversations as closely as possible to the original way in which they were taped. I did not make any alternations so the original "flavour" of young children's speech has been preserved. After the descriptions were transcribed, I started to articulate the themes or the experiential structures that make up the young children's experience of loneliness. This was done in a systematic way. Themes were recorded by isolating thematic statements that evoked the descriptions, using the language of the participants. A thematic phrase does not pretend to account for the fullness of children's lived experience of loneliness but only purports to allude to it, indicating that going beyond one aspect there are other perspectives, other ways of living the phenomenon. As the analysis became more interpretive and intuitive and the understanding of the phenomenon deepened, new themes were added and others discarded. The procedures of exploration, interpretation, verification, and renewed exploration continued in a kind of a cyclic fashion. As van Manen points out "grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning" (1990, p. 79).

It was through the writing process that the essential meaning structures were reflected upon and shown. Through the writing, concrete examples have been used to illuminate the experience, to evoke meaning. The aim of the writing was to point to, and throw light on, the experience; it did not aim to grasp it in its entity and contain it in any self-delineating concepts.

> Writing involves a textual reflection in the sense of separating and confronting ourselves with what we know, distancing ourselves from the life-world, decontexualizing our thoughtful preoccupations from immediate action, abstracting and objectifying our lived understandings from our concrete involvements...and all this for the sake of now reuniting us with what we know, drawing us more closely to living relations and situations of the life-world, turning though to a more tactful praxis, and concretizing and subjectifying our deepen understanding in practical action. (van Manen, 1989, p. 124)

The structuring of the writing, as suggested by van Manen (1990), has been arranged thematically with the existentials of spaciality (lived space), temporality (lived time), relationality (lived social relations), and corporeality (lived body), woven through descriptions. These four fundamental existentials belong to the basic structure of the lifeworld and thus they may be considered to be foundational dimensions by which each human being experiences the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Although these four existentials form a complex unity, in the study they were temporally separated in order to show their different aspects in which the richness of

meaning emerged.

The real work of analysis lay in the writing and rewriting, as predicted by van Manen (1990). In order to reach the depth that phenomenology aims to, writing cannot be accomplished in one straightforward session. In writing, the author stylizes in textual form the truth that is given significance in his or her contact with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1973). The responsive-reflective writing is the very activity of doing phenomenology.

Phenomenological Research and Pedagogy

Since any author necessarily writes from within a certain tradition, my perspective as a pedagogue has guided this study. I came to this research with the belief that all educational theory and research has to orient us to pedagogy in our relations with children. My pedagogical interest animated this research and defined the relation in which I stood with respect to the children who were involved in the study. So I did not see myself as only a researcher, but as a researcher and an educator who wanted to arrive at a better understanding of the questions concerning children's experiences of loneliness. Hence, I tried to reflect, speak, and write in a manner that is both oriented and strong in a pedagogic sense (van Manen, 1990). The pedagogic understanding of children's experiences means for the human science researcher to be in touch with the real world of children--the world that has been lost in the abstract theoretical educational research from the near past. In other words, the final text of this study (as a piece of pedagogical research) is not only a phenomenological description and interpretation of children's experiences of loneliness, but also a demonstration of the way I stand pedagogically in life, the way I observe, listen and relate to children. The need of deep pedagogical understanding of the phenomenon of children's loneliness is crucial since it is still a pure psychological research "domain." But traditional psychology does not help us as parents and teachers to "see" pedagogy in our daily lives with children. The existing models of loneliness do not help us, as pedagogues to know what is appropriate for this unique child in this particular situation here and now.

> Exactly because pedagogy is in an ultimate or definitive sense unfathomable, it poses the unremitting invitation to the creative activity of pedagogic reflection which brings the deep meaning of pedagogy of light. (van Manen, 1990, p. 149)

Thus pedagogy is something that a parent or teacher continuously must redeem, retrieve, regain, recapture in the sense of recalling. In order to reach pedagogical understanding of, and to be pedagogically responsive to children's experiences of loneliness we first need to know what the child's lived experience of loneliness is like. But what kind of research text should be produced in order to be sensitive to the question of the nature of pedagogy of children's

loneliness? What are the criteria of phenomenological human science text?

Several evaluative criteria put forth by van Manen (1990) set the standards towards which the present study aspired. These criteria are as follow:

1) A text needs to be strong and oriented. This means that the author has to make explicit the stance by which the inquiry is guided. My interests are primarily pedagogic and existential. In regard to the present study, it means that I aimed for the strongest pedagogic interpretation of the phenomenon of children's loneliness. Thus I see my pedagogic orientation not as just one approach among many others, but that this approach is distinguished from other perspectives.

2) A text needs to be rich. A rich and vivid text uses anecdotal, story, narrative, or phenomenological description to explore a phenomenon in all its experiential ramifications. All these devices engage us, draw us into reflection, require a response from us, and may lead to new insights.

3) A text needs to be deep. Rich descriptions that explore the meaning structures beyond what is immediately experienced, gain a dimension of depth. "Deep thought may be reached for by means of text but it should not be confused with the text itself," says Max van Manen (1990, p. 153). To present research by way of reflexive text is not to present findings, but to do a reading of a text that shows what it teaches. Depth, therefore, requires an openness of both the author and reader, so the meaning beyond the obvious is seen.

CHAPTER 3
REFLECTING ON THE PHENOMENON OF CHILDREN'S LONELINESS

The purpose of phenomenological reflection, as van Manen (1990) points out, is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something. The difficulties in such an attempt are related to the process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience. In the process of phenomenological reflection, the lived meaning of a phenomenon is "seen" and "shown" as exclusive of other phenomena. But the meaning or essence of a phenomenon is never simple or one-dimensional; it is rather multi-dimensional and multi-layered. The essence of a phenomenon, therefore, can never be grasped in a single definition. "Human science meaning can only be communicated textually - by way of organized narrative or prose" (van Manen, 1990, p. 78). One way of organization of the text as means to uncovering the meaning of the phenomenon is to use the contrast to explore the phenomenon of interest. In the present study the contrast is chosen to explore the phenomenon of children's loneliness. More precisely, in the following chapters in order to understand what is it like for a young child to feel lonely, the phenomenon of children's loneliness has been contrasted with similar yet different experiences of aloneness, solitude, separation, and boredom. This contrasting device has been chosen in order to ensure a strong orientation of the text. As Nietzsche (1984) asserts "every strong orientation is exclusive" (p. 64).

LONELINESS AND ALONENESS

Introduction

Perhaps every reflection on the phenomenon of loneliness inevitably starts from the reflection on the fundamental question: Is loneliness an experience of being alone? Mijuskovic (1979) believes that "man feels himself to be absolutely alone," and that "all men are activated by a fear of aloneness - loneliness" (p. 3). For him loneliness is a prism through which we see the reflection of our attempts to transcend the very feeling of isolation by communication with an other. He, therefore, uses aloneness, loneliness and isolation as synonyms. He, however, acknowledges that they are different aspects that converge toward a noematic centre. Moustakas (1972), on the other hand, asserts that being alone is a markedly different experience from being lonely. He points out that being alone is simply the objective reality of being without others.

> To be alone can refer exclusively to the physical fact of being by oneself, or it can refer to a psychological fact of being, the feeling of being alone even in a crowd, among a group of friends, or even in a relationship with one other person. (Moustakas, 1972, p. 18)

It is true that being physically alone refers to a quite neutral state of being which contains a limitless number of possibilities for the person involved. As a child I had been alone in many occasions. In Bulgaria, my native country, school is only half day--in the morning or in the afternoon. So all children were at home the rest of the day. And almost all of us were from families in which both parents worked full time. Being alone, for me as a child, was part of my everyday life. It was something inevitable, something that I had no control over, but I accepted it. Being alone, to me as a child, usually meant time for doing my homework, for practising my violin, for reading, or playing with my favourite toys. And yet, I vividly remember the occasions in which I felt alone and lonely. Thus it seems that when we say "I am alone" we do not touch either the positive or the negative dimensions of the experience. To say "I feel lonely", however, means to express the quality of the experience which may or may not be an experience of being physically alone. In other words, by saying "I feel lonely" we acknowledge our feelings of being alone or better our awareness of our psychological aloneness. But is this the same for a child? What does a child mean when he or she says "I am lonely"? What does loneliness mean for a young child? Is loneliness a sudden awareness of being alone?

You are Lonely When You are All by Yourself

"You are lonely when you are all by yourself," said a six-year-old boy. He looked at me knowingly, as if he knew what had happened to me when I was his age. When I think back, it was nothing really dramatic; the house did not go up in flames; I did not get assaulted by some scary monster. No, I was simply waiting for mom. This is how I recall the experience:

> I see my shadow on the wall. Is it that late already? I had not noticed the time because I was reading a book. My mother should have been home already. She is never late from work. What if she.... No, no, that could not happen. When I finish another page she will come... I have been reading very fast, too fast, that's why she is still not home yet. I will read another page. But what was the part of the story that I just read anyway? It does not matter. What really matters is that I finished the page and that she should have been here. I approach the window to look for my mom, but the street is empty.
>
> I look at the room to make sure that everything is in its place. Everything will be okay because I am at home. But it is not. The room looks different, unusually quiet. I shudder. I hear my strange voice saying "Mom, please come," but my words somehow fall cringing to the floor; they scurry into corners. And then silence. My shadow on the wall is darker and bigger now. I am afraid to move because it moves too. If I go in the kitchen to see what time it is, the shadow will come with me. It does not look like my shadow any more. Maybe it is someone else's shadow making fun of me by doing the

same things as I do. I may be only six years old, but I am not stupid. I am not going to let it ridicule me. From now on I will not move. Good thing that I am on my knees on the floor, close to the stove because it is getting colder in the room. Moreover nobody can see me from the window. I am safe for now. But why has the world turned so slow?

I am so lonely. I miss my Mom. I am afraid. I am alone in the whole world, and I will be alone forever if she...

What's that? The sound of the key in the front door breaks the silence. "Mom, where have you been so long?" "But I just stopped to buy some bread for dinner, honey."

As I recall this childhood experience I feel again the terrible sense of loneliness. Or is "loneliness" the wrong word? Was I really lonely? Did I simply miss my mom? Did I suddenly turn fearful that I might have lost my mom? Or did I suddenly sense the emptiness of the house? What is loneliness?

Lonely Time

As I now reflect on my childhood memory, I wonder: Is loneliness an experience of being by oneself? That seems to be the case. But I had been alone for the entire afternoon before I became bothered by what I think was loneliness. So how did my awareness of being lonely emerge? Did it begin when I saw my shadow on the wall? Seeing one's shadow is not really an unusual experience. Many children have a fun filled time playing with their shadows; for example, while trying to make different figures. How then did that particular experience of seeing my own shadow on the wall seem to trigger a feeling of loneliness? Apparently the shadow itself had nothing to do with loneliness. And yet, it did.

The shadow showed me that it was late. And yes, also that my mother was late. The shadow made me aware of the change of mood of the late afternoon. Late afternoon meant it was time for mom to be home. If I had been able to tell clocktime, and I had decided that the shadow only made it <u>seem</u> late but that it was really still early, maybe then I would not have felt lonely. Perhaps my shadow was there, on the wall, every day before my mom came home but I just had not noticed it.

Yet, it is undeniable that I experienced a sense of time that seems tied up in my feeling of loneliness. The shadow on the wall seemed to confirm it. Time for a young child is not measured by the abstract movements of the clock. Time is viscerally felt in the things and in the routines of the house. Time for the child, says Langeveld (1983), is tied into concrete events: "I am hungry!" "Isn't daddy home yet?" Thus, even before the child can read the clock he or she lives with time, not abstract clock time but lived time of the things and the world as

we experience them.

It would be appropriate to say that young children live with time through action, through different events that follow certain, though not always strict order: there is time for breakfast, time to leave for school, time at school, time to play after school, time for mom to be at work, time for mom to be at home, and so on. For the young child, however, it is not only time for breakfast, time is experienced as breakfast. Thus, it seems that for young children more important is the quality of time, its experiential content. Somehow loneliness slipped into the crack of disorder that I felt when it was "mom around the house time," except that my mom was not there. Time became a stranger; or better, time estranged me from the familiar "going on" in the home in the late afternoon.

Lonely Place

"When I am lonely I just sit on the couch. I don't watch TV, I don't do anything," an eight-year-old child said to me. The feeling of loneliness disrupts the child's ordinary intimate relation with the world of surrounding things at home. Intimacy implies closeness, nearness. Bollnow suggests that distances within lived-space depend strongly on how a person feels at that moment (1961, p. 38). There seems to exist a reciprocal relation here: when I am lonely I feel a lack of intimacy, and this lack of intimacy colours my entire world. Nothing matters any longer. Loneliness seems to have usurped my entire living space.

Loneliness prevents us from bringing things near to one another and to ourselves. Loneliness separates us from the things surrounding us and thus it destroys the mutual appropriation of our being toward one another. When I was waiting for my mom, the things in the room remained the same, in the very same places, and yet, in another sense they changed, they became different. But what changed? The things? Or did I change?

As van Lennep says, "Suddenly we see the fact that all the objects stand in their proper places as no longer real, they are no longer there for us, or to be used by us. But they continue to maintain at least one relation, namely that they affect us as an absence of intimacy" (p. 211). Is it the intimacy in our relationships with the world that the moment of loneliness lacks? What does the absence of intimacy in our relationships with the things mean?

The "Sound" of Loneliness

As I reminisce again on my childhood experience of loneliness, I feel anew the oppressiveness of the silence in the house while I was waiting for my mom. "Mom, please come," I said, but my own voice was a voice of a stranger, it didn't sound like mine. It could not help me to escape from the silent emptiness of the room. Who was I talking to? To my mom? To myself? To God? I was seeking help. But there was no one to hear me, no one to help me. Was I talking audibly with a hope to be heard? Or was I just trying to fill up the empty

silence?

A plea, said aloud, loses its meaning if there is no one to hear it, to respond to it. "The sense of being a voice in the void - speaking in a vacuum - is unsettling and disturbing," says Thomas Parkinson in his publication "The art of loneliness" (1977, p. 6). Why is silence so hollow when we are lonely? Is silence the "sound" of loneliness? Does silence in an empty house become threatening for a child just because it has a meaning of a concealment of something that can be expressed at each moment? Ben, a ten-year-old boy, recalls his experience of being alone in his silent, empty house:

> I came home from my friend's house. It was about 7:00 p.m., so it was already getting dark. I entered my home....it was dark. I don't like dark places. I put the lights on, and I saw a note on the kitchen table. The note said: "Dear Ben, we have gone to West Edmonton Mall. We'll be at home around 10:00 p.m. Love Mom."
>
> After reading that I felt left behind. They didn't even ask me to go with them. I felt lonely and scared. I was also hungry. I walked over to a cupboard and grabbed a bag of "Cheerios" and poured it into a bowl. Then I walked over to the fridge and grabbed a carton of milk and let some leak into my bowl. After that I walked over to another drawer and grabbed a spoon.
>
> I did all these things the way I do them every morning when I make my cereal, but this was different--there was nobody around. Usually my two sisters are screaming and jumping around. I hate that. But that time ...it was dark and silent. I could hear every sound that I made when I opened the drawer to take the cereal out, or when I opened the fridge to take the milk out. When everybody is at home it is so noisy that I can't hear these sounds. But this time, I heard them for the first time and they scared me in the empty house.

Sounds let us notice the "aliveness" of the things around us. Every home has its own pattern of sounds. It is even impossible to imagine that the house would be the same without them. Certainly, without the familiar, friendly sounds it wouldn't be our house. As a child, I didn't need to see what mom was doing in the kitchen--I just knew it because the cupboard, on the left of the sink, made a creak when she opened it.

And yet, when we are alone at home, even the familiar sounds seem different. We hear them as if they are something else, something that does not belong to the house. The way we hear them may change to such an extent that, like Ben, we may feel afraid. But are these sounds really different? If they are the same, then why can they not banish the silence from the house? Why do they let the silence be heard instead? Perhaps we change in the experience of

loneliness. And now our lived world has changed as well. Perhaps when we are lonely we hear our own silence. And this silence is a sign for our detachment from the people who we love and miss.

Loneliness as a "Body Experience"

A ten-year old girl said: "When I heard the front door shut, I felt like my heart stopped beating. The footsteps stopped. The laughing and the other happy sounds ended. Silence. It was like a water wave carrying sadness went through my body."

Is loneliness a body experience? What do our bodies "feel" when we are lonely? "I feel kind of cold," said Ken, a grade-five boy. "I felt kind of cold too," I replied. I knew exactly what he meant. It is not the kind of cold that we feel when we walk from school on a chilly winter day, or when we wait for the lift to take us to the top of the hill when we are on a ski trip. It is not possible to protect ourselves from the cold of loneliness by putting on a sweater or a warm coat. It is a different cold. And yet, when I have to describe it, I just cannot find a better, or a more correct word.

When, as a young child, I was waiting for my mother, I suddenly realized how fortunate I was to be so close to the stove because I felt that the room was getting colder. I even shuddered. But was the room <u>really</u> getting colder? It seems to me now that the feeling of cold had nothing to do with the temperature of the room. It didn't come from the outside, but from within.

Not only did I feel cold, I also felt stiff. Not that I couldn't move. I gradually lost the desire for it. My body became somehow heavier. I didn't feel strong enough to move. It did not happen all at once. It started when my shadow on the wall made me aware that not only was mom late, but I was also aware of my body movements. It was my body that was moving, it was its shadow that was repeating its movement, and yet the shadow somehow was not familiar. It made me feel estranged. I could observe my own movements by looking at the shadow, but they seemed so weird, so distorted that I felt like I was looking in a curved mirror.

Shadows do not have eyes. And yet, I felt like my body was a body under the eyes of the other. It was my body's shadow that became an observer, a stranger from whom I felt alienated. As Merleau-Ponty says, even for the adult the image is never a simple reflection; it is, rather, a "quasi-presence" (1964, p. 133). My body-image, my shadow created a sense of presence of a stranger. But this presence was a quasi-presence, a presence that could not make togetherness possible. I felt estranged from this presence. I did not want this "thing" to follow my motions. And to gain control over it--I simply stopped moving altogether. Was I just afraid of my shadow on the wall? Would I be afraid of it if I was not increasingly aware of being alone in the already late afternoon, and that it will be dark soon? Was I more responsive to the

particular mood of the late afternoon--the time of the day when the world prepares for nightfall--because I felt lonely? Did the change in the light sharpen my longing for my mother? Or did my longing make me aware of the change in the light of the day? Does a child experience the longing for someone loved differently when it is felt in the dark?

Alone in the Dark

> Do speak to me, Auntie! I'm frightened!" "Why, what good would that do? You can't see me." To this the child replied: "If someone speaks, it gets lighter." (Freud, 1973, p. 407)

What is it like for a child to be alone in the dark? The most difficult time for my ten-year old son is still the moment when I turn the lights off and leave his room after the last kiss and "good night." This is a kind of a ritual game between us. He does everything possible to find a good reason which will make me go back to his room, one more time at least. And he never gives up. There is always something very important that he suddenly remembers and must tell me. Or there is always something else that he urgently needs--another glass of water, or an additional quilt. I, on my side, never refuse to listen to his "story," or to give him what he wants. I feel that even the modest details in this ritual are very important for him. The prolongment of the time that we are together postpone the moment when he will find himself alone and surrounded by darkness. How does he feel when I eventually close the door? Is he lonely? Perhaps he is. Darkness creates a sense of isolation, of separation from the world. "Darkness places itself between us and things in order to cover them and fill space, then we lose our grip on the world without having consented to it" (Hering, 1880, cited in Linschoten (1987), p. 93).

After my son goes to bed, life in the house slows down, but it continues--my husband and I talk quietly, listen to music, read, or watch television. But our son does not participate in this part of our family life. He can hear us, and yet he is alone, excluded. Perhaps our voices make the darkness a little "lighter" but it is still dark in his room. He is not afraid of the dark. If he were, I would let him fall asleep with the lights on, as I used to do for so many years. It was his decision; he said he was a "big kid" and could "make it". But it does not seem to be as easy as he thought. What makes the change from light to dark so special for a child? Perhaps because this change prevents the things to manifest themselves as they are. When the lights are on, the things are clear and distinct. Light makes the world accessible to us. But does light also represent the possibility of communication with the others? And if it does, is darkness a representation of the deprivation of this possibility? "Light is a spatial medium and a mediating tertium quid 'through' or 'by' or 'in' which we can see that we are not alone; darkness, by contrast, confines us to an inner, solipstic temporality" (Mijuskovic, 1984, p. 190).

But does darkness mean the same thing for a child as it does for an adult? For an adult

dark can be restful, peaceful and it can create intimacy. It can be an escape from a busy, noisy and bright world. But for a child darkness is aloneness, separation from the rest of the world. Darkness turns the world off, it literally snatches the world away from the child. Of course, when a child is not alone he or she may even enjoy the "magic" of the disappearing world by simply closing his or her eyes. We all have seen very young children playing "hide and seek" who are convinced that when they close their eyes, they become invisible for the others in the same way that the others and the rest of the world become invisible for them. But even very young children know that in this game they can make not only the world appear again as soon as they open their eyes, but more importantly they can make themselves visible to the others as well. And yet, are children certain that this "magic trick" will work any time they try it? Why it is not working at night?

The evening dark is different for the child. The child feels lost in the evening dark perhaps because "the night takes away our evidence, we no longer know where we are" (Claudel, cited in Linschoten, 1987, p. 93). The night dark takes away the child's certainty in even the most familiar world--his or her room. It takes away from the child his or her certainty in the parents' existence, and perhaps his or her own existence for them. Perhaps the early childhood belief that when we cannot see the others they cannot see us, is never completely overcome. The dark robs the child of his or her parents' presence. When the parent leaves the child's room at bed time, what is left to the child is his or her vulnerable and perhaps incomplete self. As Merleau-Ponty says, "When, [for example], the child is seen to cry because someone goes away [it is because] he has an 'impression of incompleteness'" (1964, p. 124). Is the child's feeling of incompleteness also a feeling of loneliness? Why is the presence of the others, and most of all the parents, so important for the child?

Parents are vitally important not only to the formation but also to the preservation of the child's self. Their presence provides a context of "reflection" and re-cognition for the self; it serves as a guarantee that the self is not abandoned, alone. "Should the mother suddenly disappear for an extended length of time, the resulting disruption in the process of structuring the self and the consequent loneliness can be so severe as to endanger the very existence of the ego and its will for consciousness, its desire to live" (Mijuskovic, 1979, p. 63).

And yet, as a mother, I believe that children grow when they are lonely. The experience of loneliness expands their awareness and sensitivity towards the world, others, and themselves. Perhaps in the experience of loneliness children realize their need to be of worth to someone else. But not to be of worth to just anybody. Children, like adults, want to be of value to other persons who have a particular worth for them. The sense of isolation from the world sharpens our longing for loved and missed ones.

Closing Remarks

In loneliness we realize that there is a space between us and the others. Perhaps loneliness is this space. But from this distance, felt in the experience of loneliness, we discover the deepest meaning of others to us. We discover the meaning of being loved. Perhaps the true being of loneliness is that it becomes an experience changing the person experiencing it. Loneliness then is unlike any other way of being alone.

> Being alone is usually a between state, a bridge to the past or the future, while being lonely is always an immediate, here-now engagement with life at the extremes. To be alone means to be alone with one's self - but to be lonely means to be beside and beyond oneself, to live intensely in the moment by creating a new self. (Moustakas, 1972, p. 20)

Loneliness is our way of becoming human perhaps because in the experience of loneliness we realize not only our longing to be "with" the Other but to be "for" the Other.

But can we, as adults, fully understand the child's loneliness? Can we "see" the world through children's eyes? Can we feel their desperate loneliness while waiting for the parents to come home, or when they see them go away? Perhaps not. Adults no longer live in "undivided situations" with the others, as young children do (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Perhaps we have lost, to some extent, the ability to form genuine relations with others, which, inevitably, are a mixture of ourselves and others. But children have not yet lost this. They live in an almost symbiotic mode of existence with their parents, in the world of genuine and irreplaceable relations which makes their existence possible. And any interruptions, any uninvited changes in these relations bring about a state of insecurity, a sense of loss of integrity with the world that opens up the possibility of loneliness feelings.

CHAPTER 4
LONELINESS AND SOLITUDE

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, it is generally agreed that loneliness is distinct from solitude. Tillich (1963) believes that these two words are created in the English language to express the two sides of human aloneness; "loneliness" expresses pain in being alone and "solitude" expresses the glory of being alone. And yet, loneliness and solitude are used as synonyms by some authors (Fromm-Reichmann, 1959/1980, Mijuskovic, 1984). What makes the interchangeable usage of these words possible? Can they always be used as synonyms? How does the experience of solitude stand phenomenologically in relation to the experience of loneliness? Is it enough to state that solitude is being alone without experiencing loneliness? Or is it enough to see the difference between the experiences in the degree of feelings of aloneness? Is it simply a matter of choice by a person to be alone that makes the experiences of loneliness different from the experience of solitude? Can a child **choose** to be alone? And if the child does so, would he or she experience solitude? What does it mean for a child to choose to be alone?

A Secret Place

One may wonder how a secret place is related to the experience of solitude or of loneliness. If we see a secret place simply as a place where we keep our "secrets" away from others, we would not be able to uncover the rich and multi-layered relation between the experience of loneliness and of solitude, on the one hand, and of a secret place, on the other hand. But as any one who had a secret place as a child knows, it is much more than this. It is a place chosen by the child himself or herself. It cannot be just any place. It must have certain qualities for the child in order to be chosen. It is a place that beckons the child, perhaps because it reveals a whole new world where the child can quietly withdraw, play, or daydream. And this world is not the common world that we share with others. A secret place is a place where we are alone. But what kind of aloneness does the child experience in the secret place? Why is it that he or she would rather be alone in this place than with others?

Perhaps it will be useful if we start such investigation by looking at the meanings of the words "secret" and "alone". Etymologically secret means "separated, divided, set apart." But being apart, detached, separated, not joined to another is also the meaning of the word "alone". And for a young child, as has already been discussed, to be alone very often means to be lonely. Our culture has attached negative nuances to the meanings of the words "separated," "detached" and "apart," and adults often think it is unlikely for young children to intentionally chose to be alone if they do not have a particular reason. Killinger (1980) states

that lonely children see secret places as indispensable retreats, as fortifications, as inviolable sanctuaries from adults who do not understand.

> Whether the home is empty in the real sense, because parents are working or absent for another reason, or in the psychological sense, as bereft of love and understanding, the secret place becomes a home within the home, deflecting harm and shutting in warmth and dreams of self-worth. (p. 26)

Young Daniel, the main character of Bernard Mathias' richly observed novel The Caretakers, is an excellent example of a lonely child who has found a special place to retreat from reality. Daniel struggles to find his place in a post-war world and in a family where his parents' re-dedication to the Jewish faith permeates every aspect of his life. When the father becomes the caretaker of one of the few remaining synagogues in Paris, Daniel is confronted by two worlds. Paris is the City of Light, of fervent intellectual activity, cafe conversations, laughter and love. The synagogue, dark and oppressive, is an enclave haunted by the past, a past which Daniel is unable to make his own. Yet, Daniel discovers a space where he can escape from the grim reality of his existence which became even less bearable after his sister's departure. This is how the place is described:

> After Edith's departure, I moved into the space at the extreme end of the Talmud Torah hall on the third floor. My sister had rearranged the old attic as best she could. It was good to "get away," to enjoy spending at least a few hours no longer under the watchful eyes of the others. Edith had left behind a number of old books, classics, a Koran among volumes by Colette, Camus, and Marcel Ayme. The window looked onto a courtyard from which rose, during the day, the comforting sounds of a workshop. It was a novel thing to me to have a window opening onto a normal, soothing, workday world. It was good finally to have a grasp of this country...On the one side, the books of a municipal library; on the other, the bustle of a workshop. I settled in among my books and notebooks. I was about to begin my sixth year at school and, as Edith had in that year, I would have to start sorting through that gigantic jumble known as literature. (p. 87).

For Daniel that place was a place to "get away," to be alone as an escape from the "watchful eyes" of his never satisfied father, and from the constant criticism of the other members of the Jewish community. Daniel was alone in that place but he felt relieved, not lonely.

It is true that a child may seek escape and protection in a special place which is his or her secret place. But is such a place really a secret place? Or better, does such a place remain a secret place when a child feels lonely or threatened? What makes a place "secret" for a child? What does it mean for a child to have a secret place?

In a Secret Place One Finds Oneself at Home

In the secret place, says Langeveld (1967/1983) we are totally "at home." But isn't the house

itself a place where a young child feels totally "at home?" Is the sense of at home-ness in the secret place any different from our sense of being at home? Is a secret place just a part of the house? Apparently it is not the boundaries (such as walls or doors) that exist between this particular place--the secret place--and the other places in the house which make the place "secret". It is rather something that begins an essential unfolding from these boundaries that makes secrecy possible in this place. The human being "carves out of the universal space a special and to some extent private space and thus separates inner space from outer space" (Bollnow, 1961), p. 33). But can we say that the child's home is an "outer space" within which he or she craves out his or her special secret place?

The space in the house which is outside of the child's secret place is not outer space because it is not "the space of openness, of danger and abandonment," as Bollnow (1961) describes the outer space. The house itself is already a protection from the outer world. Even outside the walls of the house the child feels secure in the garden, in a familiar and protective neighbourhood, or in a trusted area of school or friends' houses. A secret place, therefore, is not a place where a child seeks additional protection. And in this sense it does not stand antithetically with the rest of the house.

The rest of the house, which is not included in the secret place, is a place shared by all members of the family. The things in this commonly-shared world are purposefully arranged in order to be ready for use. Not only that these things belong to their proper places in the house, but also all of them together belong to the child's world at home. The child is born and raised among the things in the house. The child does not question their usefulness or the appropriateness of their places. What makes the child feel at home is the perpetuation of the relationships between the things, on the one hand, and the child and the things, on the other. The shared meaning of the home is maintained in these relationships. If, for some reason these relationships are altered, a child may loose his or her sense of "at home-ness." This is how Tom, an eleven-year-old boy, recalled his feelings when his mother and he moved to a new house after his parent's divorce:

> At the beginning when we moved to the new house I didn't like it. Everything was strange... my desk, my posters, even my toys were somehow different in my new room. I felt like I have nothing to do...I just didn't feel at home, I guess. I know that the house is nice, and that it is ours... I mean my mom bought it, but it took time to get use to it... Now I guess I like it.

Tom needed time to reestablish his broken relationships with the surrounding things in the new house. Only after that did he feel at home again. Home, then, is where the child belongs. Home is the place where we feel bodily, spatially, temporally, and socially "fitted" to the details

of the life-world. The character Mole, in Kenneth Grahame's book, Wind in the Willows, experiences this embodied affinity between self and home:

> As he hurried along, eagerly anticipating the moment when he would be home again among the things he knew and liked, the Mole saw clearly that he was an animal of tilled field and hedgerow, linked to the ploughed furrow, the frequented pasture, the lane of evening lingering, the cultivated garden-plot... he must be wise, keep to the pleasant places in which his lines were laid and which held adventure enough, in their way, to last for a lifetime. (1908, p. 79)

Home is given to the child. Home is the place where the things are the way they are. The younger the child the less his or her contribution is to the creation of the common-shared-world of home. But even a young child is expected to respect this common-ness. A child, of course, can use some of the things at home for his or her imaginative play, but most of the time he or she is reminded of the "proper meaning" of the things--"This is a bathtub, not an ocean!" This commonly shared meaning is lived by the child but is it always fully understood or accepted by the child? In the lived world of home does the child always feel entirely "at home?" What makes the secret place "home within the home" for a child?

The child's secret place is different from the rest of the house "life." It is an enclave in his or her own everyday living space but it is not characterized by the common meanings of things in the shared-with-others world of the rest of the house. In the secret place the child is removed from it. A secret place, says Langeveld, is a place that "makes itself available to us", a place that "offers itself" and "opens itself."

> It looks at us in spite of the fact and because of the fact that it is empty. This call and this offering of availability are an appeal to the abilities of the child to make the impersonal space into his very own, very special place. And the secrecy of this place is first of all experienced as the secrecy of "my-own-ness." Thus in this void, in this availability, the child encounters the "world." (Langeveld, 1967/1983, p. 17)

In other words the secret place becomes the child's property. Its openness, and its availability to the child creates a good-in-itself atmosphere which resonates through everything in the secret place. The things in the secret place are free of the boundaries of meaning set by their use; they acquire new, personal meanings that belong only to the child. These newly acquired meanings become part of what is the secret of this place. These new, personal meanings make it possible for the child to feel more "at home" in this place than in any other part of the house. The child does not deal with concrete and practical realities of everyday life. There is a sense of mystery in a secret place just because it is free of the ordinary. It is a place where anything is plausible. The infinity of these possibilities is what attracts the child to a particular place in the house. "As a child, I have found my secret place in the attic. The

moment I opened the door I knew it was it," said Judy, a friend of mine. This is how she recalled her first encounter with the attic:

> The door was easy to open, it was a small wooden door with a cupboard handle on it. The handle felt cold to touch as the upstairs of our house was never heated adequately. I stepped through the entrance into a darker, cooler, and damp space. It didn't seem large but it was hard to tell because it was dark. The smell of wood chips was strong and somehow it comforted me. I crouched close to the attic door full with imaginings of venturing into the dark space--a space with unknown corners and unidentifiable sounds. I felt that this place was going to be very special to me.

The sense of indeterminacy, strengthen by its emptiness and darkness, makes the secret place a place of limitless possibilities.

In a Secret Place One "Comes to Oneself"

A child, however, does not seize vigorously the space in the secret place. A child does not look at the secret place as simply an empty space that he or she fills with his or her own things, or where the things from the world-shared-in-common can be used differently. If this were the case, the secret place would not be much different from the child's own room. In fact, if it were the case, the child would not need to have a secret place at all. The child's own room, however, provides the child with the opportunity to choose a place within the room, which has a special meaning for the child. Of course not every child has his or her own room; it is commonly shared with another sibling. To have a secret place in a shared room becomes perhaps even more important for the child than to have a secret place in his or her own room. In a shared room the child needs a place with a unique significance for him or her in order to be able to have privacy, or to simply withdraw from the ongoing activities in the room. What is special about the secret place is that it invites the child to explore its inner life not only with his or her body, but more importantly with his or her mind. The fact that the secret place is empty, as Langeveld (1967/1983) suggests, opens up possibilities for filling it not only with things but also with imaginings and desires. Thus whatever the child pretends or thinks about in the secret place does not necessarily result in the child's physical activities. "The secret place is withdrawn from involvement, and therefore it is a place of rest," says Langeveld (1963/1983, p. 14). In the secret place the child separates himself or herself from others. The child does not have to respond to others, does not need to be stimulated or challenged by others. In the secret place the child is self-sufficient. The secret place becomes a place where a child can find solitude. In solitude one breaks through the common pattern of everyday life and has an opportunity to see things in a new light, to become aware of a desire for new meaning, a new

way of life. "The moment of solitude is a spontaneous, awakening experience, a coming to life in one's own way, a path to authenticy and self-renewal" (Moustakas, 1972, p. 41-42). This is precisely what happens to a child who enters into the world of his or her secret place. In this world the child is in dialogue with himself or herself. It is not a dialogue that involves questions and answers, but rather it is self-reflection and meditation in which new awareness and meanings emerge. The child is alone with himself or herself, but this alone-ness does not bother the child. This alone-ness allows a self-creating process in which the child will encounter the richness of, and the satisfaction from, his or her spiritual growth. It allows the child to become acquainted with his or her own "inner" world. This alone-ness allows the child to come to himself or herself. "'To come to oneself' means to be ready again to adopt an attitude, ready to give oneself in trust to the place where one finds oneself" (Langeveld, 1967/1983, p. 15).

Ted, an eleven-year-old boy, described his experience of "coming to oneself" in his secret place:

> After being there for a while, I forget what is around me and start looking more inside... I mean inside myself. It's something like daydreaming. But when I think about it now I remember everything. These are happy memories. I like to be there alone.

In his secret place Ted reached an almost wordless experience of his own self in which his surrounding life ceased to exist. He was not really aware of anyone or anything else. Sounds coming from the house cannot disturb the child's listening to himself or herself. It is still in the secret place. And in such stillness the child's inwardness is discovered. The child sense of self-identity and self-autonomy is enriched. The child's spirit is limitless, free in this experience of "depth, happiness, or melancholy, which can accompany the special quietude of the mode of being which belongs to children" (Langeveld, 1967/1983, p. 14). This special quietude of being is reached in moments of solitude.

> In solitude there is peace and joy and sense of the eternal rhythms of life, a natural beauty that grows and expands, quietly, like the peaceful movements of a stream, then suddenly the person is in touch with life and the mystery in the universe. (Moustakas, 1972, p. 52)

In the secret place a child's spirit is not imprisoned in the discipline of clocktime. Clocktime does not belong to the secret place. Clocktime belongs to the world outside; it determines the life in the outside world and has meaning only in this shared-in-common world. In the secret place a child lives in the subjective dimension of time, a dimension in which one can choose to become oneself "by appropriation of his own future in the process of having been" (Troutner,

1974, p. 164).

But is it enough to say that in the secret place a child lives in the dimension of subjective time? How does the child experience the time subjectively when he or she is in his or her secret place? Does the child live within a "pure present" in his or her secret place? If it were the case, than the magic of the blend between the past and the present that dwell simultaneously in some secret places would be impossible. In the description of Vanessa's secret place, from Margaret Laurence's novel A Bird in the House, we can sense the fusion between the past and the present that the young girl experiences in her secret place:

> There were many of these--odd-shaped nooks under the stairs, and dusty tunnels and forgotten recesses in the heart of the house where the only things actually to be seen were drab oil paintings stacked upon the raters and trunks full of outmoded clothing and old photograph albums. But the unseen presences in these secret places I knew to be those of every person, young and old, who had ever belonged to the house and had died...(Laurence, 1978, p. 34-35).

In that place the past speaks to Vanessa in the present. The past says van den Berg (1972), "is not primarily significant at the time it was taking place: at that time it may have had hardly any significance. The past is significant now." (p. 80). This 'present past' fills up the space of her secret place and makes itself significant in the way that the objects appeared to Vanessa.

But does a child in his or her secret place experience the "past" or the "future" in the objective sense shared in the common world? Van den Berg (1972) suggests that in one's entire life "The past provides the conditions for what is going to happen in life, but the acts of life are rooted in the future" (p. 86). It seems that in its objective dimension time connects us to others: "You have to get up early tomorrow, Peter. It is time to go to bed!"; "Hurry up, Peter, you'll be late for school!"; "Don't wait for me for supper, I'll be late from work." In our Western culture the objective dimension of time gives us sense of directionality and value in our lives with others. But "whoever truly wants to enter the secret place must relinquish any intentional relationship toward others," says Langeveld (1967/1983 p. 12). In the secret place interactions with others are suspended, and so is time. Perhaps in the secret place time is experienced as a primordial present--a present that does not have the boundaries of a past or a future but rather both the past and the future come together in the time present. Perhaps this mode of existence of time in the secret place makes it possible for us to simply "forget the time." The sense of serenity created out of the certitude of the presence of the good-in-itself resonating through everything in the secret place fills up the space and makes "coming to oneself" possible.

When the Secret Place Becomes a Hiding Place

> Only when some-"thing" in the world or some other person calls on the child in a manner that forces the child again into an attitude of spiritual distance and objective participation is the world again experienced as separated from us, devoid of the inner force. (Langeveld, 1967/1983, p. 14)

"Peter, come here, supper is ready!" "I'm coming, mom," and the magic of the secret place is destroyed. The harmony, the sense of unity of the self with the place, no longer exists. The child is back to the ordinary, to the shared-in-common world. And in this world the child is again vulnerable to the "real things out there." In this world the child is again oriented to others, dependent on their presence or absence, on their willingness to be there for the child. In a shared-in-common world the child is vulnerable to his or her imagined or real fears. The child can be alone and lonely only in such a world. In the secret place the child enjoys the secret intimacy of aloneness. In the common world, the child suffers from his aloneness--aloneness that can become unbearable loneliness.

Ben, a ten-year-old boy, went to his secret place--the basement, with the hope that he would overcome his oppressive loneliness. This is how he recalled his effort to find a refuge in his secret place while he was alone at home:

> I was very scared to be alone. I took the bowl of cereal and walked down to my basement. Whenever I am alone, I like to go to my basement because there I feel like I am not alone. All my stuffed animals are down there so I don't feel alone. I like my basement very much. It is very special for me. When I come from school I always go to my basement and rest for a while. My sisters almost never come down so I can do whatever I like. Sometimes I don't do anything special there but I like to be there. The basement has small windows with curtains, so nobody can really see me from outside.... Nobody could find out that I was alone at home.... I put the T.V. on. I don't remember what was on. Then I sat on the couch... The couch is warm and cosy. I like it. I like to lie on it and think about all sorts of things. But it was different this time. For me this time it was more important that it was alongside of the wall so nobody could come from behind. I didn't want to move from the couch...I couldn't bear the thought that I may go upstairs. But even in the basement I didn't feel secure enough. I felt lonely, very lonely and scared... I looked at my watch...Oh, God, when will everybody be home?

Apparently, the basement--Ben's secret place--was no longer a place of rest, enjoyment, or leisure. It acquired new meaning for Ben. It became a place to hide from unwelcome strangers.

But it failed to give him the sense of complete protection from the overwhelming fear and insecurity that he felt in his overwhelming awareness of being alone in his empty house. When a child hides, what is of prime importance is to choose a place which can prevent the other from seeing him or her. Curtains can grant a child such a protection. In our home the curtains were long and heavy so, as a child, I used to hide behind them. I didn't hide there from strangers. I liked to be there when my mom was giving her music lessons or when she had friends over for tea. I knew that she knew that I was there, so I was not really hiding. For me it was more like having my own space from where I could sense the presence of others in the room, but they could not see me. "Here we are at home, in the real and immediate vicinity of the others, so that really nobody needs to notice our absence" (Langeveld, 1967/1983, p. 186). When a child does not feel threatened, he or she can find a whole new world behind the curtains. The curtains allow the child behind them to hear the ongoing life in the room; they create a flexible visual barrier which unites the outer and the inner world. The child is alone, separated from others, and yet, others are in some sense present in this place. Langeveld (1967/1983) points out that physically others remain on the outside, but they are still present on the inside because they are still seen or observed from this space.

There are other places that allow the child to become "invisible" to others while remaining in a contact with them. When children hide while playing "hide and seek," they are bodily separated and alone in their solitary hiding places. And yet, "It is aloneness with a sense of togetherness that unites all of these games" (Barritt et al., 1983, p. 158). The place where a child hides in "hide and seek" is not a secret place. The main purpose of a good hiding place is to prevent the other, who is "It" from seeing the child. The child, however, enjoys playing the game if he or she can see the one who is "It". Thus the child is by himself or herself alone but safe and, most importantly sought. The enjoyment and the importance of the game for the child consists of the child's conviction that he or she is sought. "It is very painful when they won't come to find you; a dirty trick; then you are alone and deserted. They would rather not see you. You are ignored" (Barritt et al., 1983, p. 158). Some children cannot stand the tension of being alone for too long and if they are not found quickly they run out of hiding.

But Ben did not hide in a way that would allow him to feel united with those from whom he was hiding. On the contrary--he hid with the hope that such a contact would not occur. The curtains in the small windows in Ben's basement had quite a different role from the role that the curtains in my house played in my childhood games. The curtains in Ben's basement had to keep the outer space--the place of uncertainty--aside. They separated the inner space from outer space. They had to protect Ben and give him a sense of security. For him, the world behind the curtains, the outside world, became unwelcome and threatening. The curtains

assured Ben's "invisibility" to strangers.

The need for protection transformed Ben's secret place into a place to hide from a possible invasion of strangers. In a real secret place--a place grounded in a mood of tranquillity and peacefulness--the child's visibility to the others is not important. When the child intentionally seeks to become "invisible" to others in the secret place, the place is no longer a secret place--it becomes a hiding place, a place where no one would search.

The things in Ben's secret place became uncommunicative and unrelenting. They lost their special meanings for Ben. They did not "speak" to him. His stuffed animals could not give him the familiar sense of the presence of another. The sounds coming from the television could not fill up the empty silence of the room. The images from the screen could not capture his attention. The couch, the warm and cosy couch, did not invite him for a peaceful rest or daydreaming; it had a new role--a role of a safeguard. He sat on the couch and stayed there motionless, alert. It was impossible for Ben to feel completely "at home" in this place. He could not find a way to "come to himself" in a place that was no longer trusted. The place was no longer "full" of him; it was hollow. He could not find a way to "come to himself" because he could not be <u>with</u> himself. He was <u>by</u> himself.

He began to panic. His fear and anxiety filled up the space. The danger was only in his imagination, and yet he sought shelter in his secret place against something that may never come. Frost (1930) describes his feeling of an imaginable danger when coming back in a dark house which is very much like Ben's feeling in his hiding place:

> I always have felt strange when we come home
> To the dark house after so long of absence
> And the key rattled loudly into place
> Seemed to warn someone to be getting out
> At one door as we entered at another. (p. 112)

This imagined other was not like the one who dwells anonymously in the mysterious world of the secret place, and who changes his roles in accordance with the child's desires. The one that Ben imagined lived in the common world--a world much more frightening than the self-created one. The anticipation of this potential future danger let the clocktime rule the place. It was time for his mother, father, and sisters to come home. But when? If they come soon the danger would disappear. No one can threaten him when everybody is around. The clocktime did not seem to be in a hurry. It was not sympathetic to Ben's feelings. Time only expanded Ben's sense of separation and isolation from his loved ones. Ben felt the anguish of loneliness, not the tranquillity and joy of solitude. He was desperately lonely in his aloneness.

Closing Remarks

Loneliness is a powerful, overwhelming experience that expands our awareness and

sensitivity towards the world, others, and ourselves, but in loneliness we cannot be with ourselves. In solitude we are alone but we are with ourselves. In solitude we discover who we are. Unlike loneliness which just befalls us, solitude is self-initiated; it comes and goes in its own genuine moments as a capacity of the self to find itself. The experience of solitude allows us to discover our own natural "rhythms" and align our existence accordingly. In the experience of solitude we are "in tune" with the present moment, with the place in which we dwell physically and spiritually, and with our own self.

The secret place is the young child's pathway to the discovery of his or her personal identity in aloneness. But to have a secret place becomes possible only when a child is capable of distancing himself or herself from the rest of the world, and from the others. This is not an easy task to accomplish. It is a gradual process of learning to be alone.

> The capacity to be alone is linked with self-discovery and self-acceptance; it is a process of coming to terms with our inner self, bringing about a sense of peace. Such discovery takes time, solitude and aloneness; it is a process of learning. (Paterson, Blashko & Janzen, 1991, p. 275)

This learning starts perhaps when the child first chooses a place under the table or behind a piece of furniture as his or her favourite place to play. In such a place the child is separated but still connected to the rest of world and to the others. Langeveld (1967/1983) suggests that to have a real secret place becomes possible at about eight years of age (the age of fantasy, discovery, and the production of personal creativity) when the child begins to create his or her own world. An adolescent even more specifically and vigorously searches for "his" or "her" place, which may not be "secret" but is still a very special and personal place. Thus the secret place changes with age providing the child a space to be alone and to think deeply about things in his or her own lifeworld, about his or her deepest needs, feelings, and desires. And yet, even in his or her secret place, a young child is not always able to find the peacefulness of solitude. There are moments when the child becomes suddenly aware of his or her aloneness that calls the child to relationship with special others. And when these others are not there for the child, loneliness feelings take the place of solitude. The child can no longer be with himself or herself-- rather the child needs to be with others. The experiences of loneliness and of solitude, however, are not antithetical. They both have a place in the child's development of personal identity. As Jung noted,

> growing up involves the progressive achievement of a capacity to be alone and to be with others. Aloneness and togetherness are interdependent. I can only be alone in so far as I can be together with others. I can only be together with others if I am able to be alone. (in Hobson, 1974, p. 77)

Thus, we as parents and educators need to understand more deeply how the child's identity is shaped in the experiences of solitude and of loneliness. Only than can we understand the meanings of these experiences and what part they play in a child's life and development. Perhaps through such an understanding we can become more sensitive to some of the "good-ness" of these experiences instead of only fastening on their "evil-ness." But before that we still have much more to learn about them.

CHAPTER 5
LONELINESS AND SEPARATION

Introduction

Weiss (1973/1987) argues that loneliness is a separation distress without an object. But is it possible for anyone to experience an objectless feeling? Has anyone ever experienced anything like an objectless hatred or objectless love? Is it possible to understand a child's loneliness feeling if we see it as a feeling not tied to an object? Is it possible for a child who feels left or abandoned by his or her parents and is longing for intimacy and love not to have at least a vague awareness what he or she is longing for? It is inconceivable for me to accept that it is possible for a child to experience an objectless loneliness feeling and that in our attempt to understand the child's feelings we should separate the child's world from his or her experiencing it. In order to understand the child's loneliness we first need to understand his or her personal world. Loneliness does not exist in the world as a separate entity outside the person feeling it, and thus loneliness itself cannot be the object of the person's feelings. Yet loneliness is a feeling that changes the person's dwelling in his or her personal world. Van den Berg (1972) suggests that the relationship between human being and world is so close that it is erroneous to separate them in a psychological or psychiatric examination.

> If they are separated, the patient ceases to be this particular patient and his world ceases to be his world. Our world is not primarily a conglomeration of objects that can be described scientifically. Our world is our home, a realization of subjectivity. If we want to understand man's existence, we must listen to the language of objects. If we are describing a subject, we must elaborate on the scene in which the subject reveals itself. (van den Berg, 1972, p. 40)

Weiss (1973) suggests that loneliness in adults parallels separation distress in children. Ellison (1978), in his social and developmental analysis of loneliness, emphasized that psychiatric syndromes of psychopathic personality are associated with a high incidence of disrupted affectional bonds during childhood. Moustakas (1961) supports the idea that "the most sericus threat to a child's whole experience, and one which could lead to loneliness in adulthood is being abandoned or left alone by the mother" (p. 35). The assumption that early unsatisfactory attachment experiences relates to adulthood loneliness has been supported by numerous research findings (Brennan, 1982,; Ostrov & Offer, 1978; Peplau, Miceli, & Morasch, 1982; Perlman & Peplau, 1981). Although the correctness of this assumption is evident, its acceptance leads to an understanding of childhood experiences of separation from the mother ("the love-object") as the origin of adulthood loneliness. Thus the experience of separation from the mother as it is lived by the child is somehow ignored. What does it mean for a young child to be separated from his or her mother? Bowlby (1973), whose theory inspired Weiss' theory of

loneliness, offers an already classical description of the effects of infant-mother separation. He notes that "Young children are upset by even brief separations. Older children are upset by longer ones. Adults are upset whenever a separation is prolonged or permanent as in bereavement" (p. 30). The reactions of young children experiencing separation follow a consistent pattern, according to Bowlby (1960, 1969). First there is protest, calling, screaming, thrashing about, lasting from several hours to several days. This stage is followed by a second stage of despair, withdrawal, and a rejection of attempts by strangers, such as nurses to make friends, to entertain, or to play. The return of the mother during either of these stages will rapidly bring the child back to apparent normality. The third stage is that of detachment and apathy, which roughly begins after more than two weeks of separation. The detached children do not fuss or fight; they will play alone or with adults; they are quiet and well-behaved. But they will not relate emotionally to anyone, even their own mothers. It appears then, that for these infants, the feeling of mother is lost. But can we really understand how they feel by only observing young children's behaviour after and during the separation from their mothers? Are they simply upset? How does the world look to a child who is separated from his or her mother and who cries, protests, and insists that the mother should come back? Van den Berg (1972) suggests how to approach an individual in order to better understand his or her world: "He who desires to know what, in a given situation, is happening psychologically, does well to put himself in that situation," (p. 63).

Away from Mom

I vividly recall the day when I was torn away from my mother. After the divorce, I was forced (for some political reasons and against my mother's and my own will) to live in my father's house. This is how I recall my experience of separation from my mother when I was five years of age:

> My father's hand grabs mine. It is useless to even try to escape. He is a big man. "You must come with me now," he says. The only thing that I can reach while holding out my hand is my mom's shirt left on the chair. I desperately grasp it while my father takes me out of the house.
>
> Everything in my father's house is especially prepared for me--new toys, new bed, new desk. But I do not want them. I look at all this through my eyes filled with tears. I want my own toys and books, my bed, my room. Foremost, I want my mom! I still clutch her shirt, already wet with my tears.
>
> It smells like her!

Now, after so many years, I am still thankful that I took my mom's shirt with me. The smell of my mother's shirt reestablished the coherence of my existence. It made my life possible. But

how could a shirt "do" that? Of course, it was not just any shirt: it was my mother's shirt that stayed on my pillow at bed time. And it was my mom's "smell" that reestablished the integrity of my world.

Perhaps smells are even more important than material objects in making us feel at home. Isn't it the smell that reveals to us the "aliveness" of the things around us? What is a kitchen without the smell of a freshly cooked meal? Smells make a place home for us, but only when we connect them to the lives of people who are significant. The smell of the fresh cooked meal does not just belong to the kitchen itself. It is there because somebody whom we love and who loves us prepares the meal. The absence of the smell from the kitchen means that no one is there to cook for us.

Smell allows us to perceive the integrity of the things in our world. It revitalizes the intimate relation between things and people. We may become more sensitive to smells from home when we feel lonely. It is fall time and the leaves are covering the sidewalk. I walk down the street and suddenly the smell of the autumn leaves takes me back home. This is the smell of my childhood, walking through the thick layer of leaves around the house. A sense of longing overcomes me; almost like loneliness. I miss something, but not just the smell itself. Perhaps smell calls forth the world from which we feel separated; it sharpens our awareness of the absence of people we love.

The separation from my mother destroyed the existence of the familiar, trusted world of my home. But was I simply upset by the separation? Or was I lonely too? I was really upset. I was feeling vulnerable to the shake-up that the separation brought to my life. Killinger (1980) suggests that for children separation is like enduring a death. "That is the character of separation. It is like enduring a death. It entails a certain amount of grieving or mourning" (Killinger, 1980, p. 27). It seems then that a child experiences separation as loss. The actual "disappearance" of the mother, however, is only the first of many related losses. The separation from the mother is an interruption, and perhaps also loss of the child's "taken-for-granted" flow of life. But is it this interruption that upsets the child while separated from the mother? What is the essence of feeling upset? "The central image in the feeling of upset is one of disorder and disarray" (Gaylin, 1979, p. 93). Feeling upset includes a sense of confusion, an interruption of the orderliness of life. When we are upset we feel "mixed-up," "shaken up," "agitated," "beside ourselves," or "stirred up." It seems then that feeling upset, which Bowlby (1973) suggests is central to the experience of separation, is essentially a feeling of disorder in the person's lifeworld.

In my experience of being separated from my mother, however, the feeling of disorder in my personal world was not predominant. What was essential for me was that I had lost my

sense of integrity with the surrounding world. The surrounding world of my father's house and the rest of the world had changed its appearance, and yet it had not become chaotic for me. I simply did not feel that I belonged to it. I was lonely, very lonely. Yet, my mother's shirt somehow narrowed the distance between me and the world that I had lost. On the one hand, the smell of my mother's shirt expanded my longing for my mother, but on the other hand made it possible for me to maintain the sense of connectedness with her. The smell of the shirt made it possible to feel that my mother was there while I was fully conscious of her absence. Perhaps it was the shirt that gave me the sense of her "arms around" me, the sense of being held, which kept me from falling. "The sense of holding exists between fantasy and reality: we feel held even though we know that we are not" (Josselson, 1992, p. 34). But in my experience the sense of being held could not banish my overwhelming loneliness feeling. I felt separated from the world I had lost and the only meaningful connection to it was my mother's shirt which sharpened my awareness of my ultimate aloneness. I felt entirely alone in the world. I was desperately lonely, but I did not have the feeling of being left by my mother. I did not feel abandoned.

Yet, young children often feel being left in less dramatic situations such as on the first days of school, nursery, or day-care centres, staying at home with a nanny or a baby sitter, and so on. It is true that in all these situations children are physically separated from their parents for a certain period of time but not all children have the feeling of being left. What is the essence of a child's experience of feeling he or she "being left?" Does a child who feels left also feel lonely? How does the feeling of being left stand phenomenologically to the experience of feeling lonely?

Feeling of Being Left

A month after my five-year-old son Peter and I joined my husband in Paris, France where he was doing his postdoctoral study we decided that Peter was already well adapted and it was time for him to start kindergarten. We made the necessary inquiries and Peter was accepted in the program in the school which was just two blocks away from our apartment. We had one week to prepare Peter "psychologically" for the upcoming event. I explained to him that I would pick him up for lunch every day and of course every day after school. I also vividly described how wonderful it would be for him to make new friends, to play with them at school, and how much easier it would be for him to find friends elsewhere when he learned how to speak French. He seemed to understand everything and did not show any anxiety.

When the day came, we walked to the school as we had done several times during the previous week. But that walk was different from all our previous walks. Peter, who was usually jumping around me or running back and forth, was holding my hand as we walked quietly

along, almost in complete silence. I was trying to initiate a conversation but he was not responding. Since the parents were not allowed to stay at school when the classes began, I had to leave Peter at the school's front door in the hands of his friendly, smiling teacher. She assured me that he would be all right and I told her that I had an indubitable confidence in her ability to handle the situation. During our conversation Peter, who could not understand a single word of it, remained ignorant still holding my hand. I told him briefly what the conversation was about and that it was time for him to go with his teacher. "I don't want you to leave me here, mom. I want to go home with you. Please, mom!" He was not crying. His eyes seemed unusually big and I could see that the tears were coming. I told him that I would come for him in just two hours and that nothing bad could happen to him. "Mom, please be first," he said and walked in.

"How did you feel when I left you there?" I asked him recently? "I felt lost. I thought that I was not going to see you again. I thought that something might happen to you...something bad, I don't know what, and that you would not be able to come to pick me up. I don't remember anything else. I didn't know how long two hours was but it seemed too long to me. I was afraid that I would have to stay there forever. I didn't want you to leave me ever again."

Peter's disclosure of his experience and feeling of being left reminds me of the child in Milne's poem Disobedience (1979, pp. 32-35) who is afraid that the mother who leaves to "go down to the end of town" without him will never return. But in the poem, unlike my son's experience, the child's fear becomes true--"Jemes James Morrison's mother hasn't been heard of since." Not only did I return, but ever since I always make sure that I am the first mother to be seen at the school door. But even now Peter seems to experience a sense of insecurity when we leave him for his weekly one-hour French lessons. He never forgets to say "Please, don't be late to pick me up." So we are always on time.

Peter felt lost in the new school environment, insecure and vulnerable without me. He was afraid that I might disappear and that he would never see me again. Peter and I have always had a very close relationship but the experience of living in a strange country has added something new to it. I was Peter's lone connection to the rest of the world--the unknown and frightening world of that new place. His first day at school was shocking not only because he found himself in an unknown environment but most of all because he was somewhere without me for the first time since we had left home. Naturally, when I left him at school he felt abandoned, left alone in a strange place with strange people, and he could not make sense of it. My arguments regarding the importance of learning French and making new friends had no meaning for him. He did not need to learn French. He did not need to know French in order to talk to me or to his father. At that particular moment he did not need to make new friends

either--he was perfectly happy to be just with me and, for the first time in my busy professional life, I had devoted all my time only to him. He must have sensed how delighted I was to be with him all day long. And then, out of the blue, that school came into his life. He could not understand my "good reasons" for "leaving" him at school. Nothing had changed--I did not start working or studying as I used to do back home. Why did he have to be "thrown out" of his paradise? Why did he have to spend so many long hours without me and with all these other people? Did he see anything good for himself in the first few days at the new school? Was he lonely? Perhaps he was. Van Manen (1990) suggests that although the child is sometimes left "for some good" reasons, such as on the first day at school, the experience of loneliness is inevitable.

> Loneliness is something every child is to face-whether it be during the first sleep-over, at summer camp, at bedtime in a dream, through the various experiences of story, when the parents are out for an errand, and so forth. (van Manen, 1990, p. 89)

It is quite natural for us, as adults, to anticipate that a child may feel left or upset on the first day of school or camp, but it is not as easy to understand how a child could feel left and lonely at a sleep-over party--a cheerful event which is usually expected with a great excitement. This is how Chris, a ten-year-old boy, recalls his experience of feeling lonely at his first sleep-over:

> I remember when I was seven years old I was invited to a sleep-over birthday party. I was really excited because I always wanted to go to a sleep-over party but my parents didn't let me. The party was OK but when it was bedtime I suddenly felt very lonely and sad. I felt a bit lost. I missed my sister and my parents. I was sitting in the corner trying to think about all the good things coming up on the next day when my dad was to pick me up. My friend's room looked very nice. He had more toys than me. He had even Nintendo, but I wasn't interested in playing it. It wasn't my room... Everything around me seemed too small... like it was too far away from me. I don't know why...maybe because nothing was really important for me. I didn't really care about anything around me. I felt kind of homesick. I wanted to be home... I wished time could go faster... When my dad came to pick me up in the morning I was glad to get away from that place.

Chris felt lost and a bit homesick at his first sleep-over. Van Manen (1990) suggests that a child can only feel left from a basis of a relation or situation of "at homeness" or belonging. What does it mean to belong? Or better, what does it mean for a young child to have a sense

of belonging or at homeness? Apparently a child is not born with a sense of belonging to a particular place. The sense of belonging to a particular place is gradually developed as a child grows up. Yet "home" does not mean simply the place in which we are born or where we live with our families. Perhaps what is more important for a child, in order to develop a sense of home, is that it is a place where a child can experience self in a full and unique manner; a place where a child is the most unique and special person; a place where a child feels loved no matter what he or she has or has not done.

> For almost everyone the notion of home is usually a positive one. It is the known as opposed to the unknown; it is certainty as opposed to uncertainty, security rather than insecurity, the knowledge that in the final analysis someone else, our parents, will make the necessary decisions and will protect us from harm. It is the familiar and predictable. Better than the unknown, the unpredictable, with a stranger imposing strange ways. It is also the primordial sense of the need for security, of being held, of belonging. (Shaw, 1990, p. 226)

Was the unknown, the fear of the unpredictable or the sense of insecurity that Peter and Chris were experiencing while being "left" in a new place? Were they simply missing home in its sense of a known and familiar place? Or were they missing the intimacy and the familiarity of the relationships they had known at home? Is not home a place where we feel related to everything and everyone in a unique way? But is the feeling of lost relatedness what we experience when we are lonely? Is loneliness feeling essentially a feeling of separateness? Is the feeling of separateness an opposite to the feeling of relatedness in the experience of loneliness? Perhaps before we ask the latter question, we should ask "What is relatedness?"

Relatedness versus Separation

The Latin root of the word relate means "carry back" (Hartog, 1980, p. 24). But what is it which is "carried back" or "brought back" to us in such a way that we can feel related? Can we grasp the essence of relatedness in all its modalities? Josselson (1992) suggests that "Our limited language on relatedness requires that we rely on metaphor to grasp its various phenomena" (p. 6). Throughout the exploration of the dimensions of relatedness, she uses the metaphor of space.

> At birth, the cord that ties us prenatally to our mother is cut, and we are alone. We are thrust into separateness, physically bound within the confines of our body. [...] Relationship becomes the only means of overcoming the space between us. (Josselson, 1992, p. 4)

Josselson sees the relationships as ways of transcending space, of reaching through space, actually or metaphorically, and being in contact with each other. The sense of relatedness then does not require a physical contact or even spacial proximity. In other words, we can feel

related to people from whom we are physically separated. In my own experience of being separated from my mother I had not lost the sense of relatedness to her. Perhaps the physical presence of her smell helped me to transcend the space between us so I could feel I was being reached by her through the emptiness in space.

The sense of relatedness to others, like the sense of at homeness, is built gradually as a child grows up. Before birth, the child is physically joined to the mother; the child is within her physical body space. After the birth, when the child is no longer an inseparable part of his or her mother's body, the feeling of being with the mother changes. Perhaps a very young child feels with the mother when he or she is in her arms where the child can feel the warmth of the body's contact. The parents', and most of all the mother's arms, have held, comforted, and hugged the child from the day he or she was born. The parents' strong arms which are grounding, have kept the child from falling, and have always been there for the child. Their "thereness" is something that a young child takes for granted as an essential background to his or her existence. But what really is "thereness?"

> As best I can understand it, the "thereness" of someone speaks to holding. In earliest experience, one can be held only by someone who is physically "there." But holding offers the feeling of support as well. Later in life we still need that support from people-a sense of people's "thereness" that seems to prevent us from falling. (Josselson, 1992, p. 31-32)

Thus, it seems that as we grow up, the experiences of being held as the essence of "thereness" moves from the physical to the emotional realm and becomes more symbolic. For a young child, however, the "thereness" is in the physical presence or availability of the parents, and most of all the mother. The mother's "thereness" means for a young child a smooth and familiar flow of daily routines--a flow that is part of the young child's world. The mother's "thereness" gives a child a feeling of safeness not only in a sense of order and directionality, but also in a sense of protection.

This is how Anne, a friend of mine, recalls her sense of her mother's "thereness" when she was sick in bed at the age of about seven:

> I am alone in my mom and dad's bed. I can hear her in the kitchen, the sounds of the radio and the washing machine fill the air. I feel far away from her, but I know that she is there. Here comes the queasy feeling again. I feel like I am on a roller coaster. Up and down, up and down. I think I'm going to throw up. I hate throwing up. I hate the way it tastes and the way it smells and the way it feels and the way it looks. I check to be sure the special bucket is in place. Throwing up is awful, but missing the bucket is worse. The solid feeling

> is spreading up my throat. No time to lose. I call for mom. "MOM!"
> She arrives within seconds, just in time to hold my head and stroke it as I lean over and throw up in the bucket. It stinks, she doesn't seem to notice. It looks ugly and lumpy; she doesn't seem to notice. She just pays attention to me and how I feel. When I'm done she wipes my face with damp cloth. She re-arranges the covers and pillows and helps me get comfortable again. We talk about how I feel and then she leaves, saying to call her if I need her again. She doesn't need to say this. I know she is there, just like she has always been.

Anne was alone in the room but she could sense her mother's presence--she could hear the sounds coming from the kitchen. The sounds confirmed her mother's physical proximity. Perhaps if she could not hear the sounds from the kitchen she would not be so sure that her mother was there. The sounds from the kitchen assured Anne of her mother's "thereness." And she felt safe in her alone-ness in the room. She was physically detached from her mother, alone, sick, and drowsy in her parents' bed, but she did not feel lonely. She felt "held" in the trusted environment of her parents' bedroom. Her mother was there to support her, to hold her head or arm when she needed. Nothing else mattered for her mother. She didn't seem to notice the stinking, ugly vomit. It was her, Anne, who absorbed all her attention. Her mother was there only for her. They, Anne and her mother, were together against the malady.

But the "thereness" does not always mean togetherness. The "thereness" can just provide the child with "space," within certain boundaries, in which he or she feels safe while alone in the felt presence of the parent. Perhaps the "thereness" provides the child an opportunity to explore and to master his or her capacity to be alone in a near proximity but not in an immediate presence with the parent. Thus the "thereness" does not necessarily require responsiveness in a context of continuity. The "thereness," therefore, is just a possibility for togetherness. "Mom, are you there?" asks my son any time when a temporary silence fills the space. He knows that I am always "there" and yet the silence somehow lets the "worm of doubts" in his heart. But am I really always there for him?

If I were always "there" for my son then how is it possible for him to ask "Mom, are you there?" But his question seems meaningless only if we assume that no one would ask such a question in the physical presence of another. Yet, he asks me every time when my "thereness" is not present in a sense of togetherness.

> The person with us is not another isolated individual, next to us, who throws words in our ear and who remains foreign to the objects around us. He is the person who is either with us or not with us and who makes the degree of togetherness or distance visible in objects, concretely and in reality. Togetherness is not mere idea. Togetherness or distance appears with the

physiognomy of the world. (van den Berg, 1972, p. 65-66)

Van den Berg (1972) uses a scene from a book by Carry van Bruggen to show how the mother's presence could change the things in the young child's world to such an extent that they could disappear and return.

> The mother is sitting behind the house. As she is scraping carrots, she is singing a song of which she only knows the first lines. "My beloved Spain, land of my ancestors, my beloved Spain, land where I live." Again and again, the same lines. When the mother fetches another bunch of carrots, she is gone for a moment. Just now, when mother stopped singing to get another bunch, all things-the house, the sky, the tree-were different, almost as if they were not there at all. If one wanted to know whether all these things were still there, one had to take another look; but when mother returned and resumed her singing, "My beloved Spain," everything was there quite naturally. (van den Berg, 1972, p. 62)

Thus togetherness, which existed in the mother's singing, seems to have the power to reestablish the order of the things and the world for the young girl from Carry van Bruggen's book became familiar and trusted again. But how was that possible? Were the things really capable of changing their appearance? Their shape? No one has ever been able to register such changes. Yet every one of us knows how a word, a look or a gesture can brighten things or make them gloomy. It is the presence of another that changes the way we <u>see</u> the things in the world. How does the world look for a child whose parent's presence makes the degree of distance and not of togetherness more visible?

Feeling Excluded

In his novel <u>The Caretakers</u>, Bernard Mathias describes how young Daniel, the main character in the novel, felt every time he went to gather hazelnuts with his father:

> From time to time my father hoisted me onto his motorbike. He drove me to the wood where hazelnuts were gathered and promised that before long I would have a pocketknife all my own. He spoke little, his mind absorbed by that other place I had never seen. I waited for him to notice me, to touch me, to acknowledge my presence next to him. But he remained absorbed, distant, far away, as his knife hacked its way through the brush. Once in a clearing, I tried to make myself inconspicuous beside him. Finally, I chanced a few questions about the trees and the animals, the rain or the pond. I knew the answers. It was simply for the sake of a safe conversation. He did not answer. (p. 25)

Young Daniel and his father where walking next to each other in the woods but the felt distance between them was impossible to overcome. The father still lived in a reality of the war, a past reality unknown to the son. The son, a five-year-old child, could not find his place in the reality of his father's world. He felt excluded from that past that seemed so much more

important for his father than Daniel himself. What was important for Daniel was the present, the fact that he and his father were walking in the woods, one of the very few opportunities for them to be together. For Daniel the walks were his chance to be with his father, to talk to him, to be noticed by him. The walks were Daniel's chance to find his place in his father's world. But that never happened. The silence of their walks pronounced the end of Daniel's expectations, the end of his hope for intimacy. There was emptiness, silence. There was an unconquerable distance between the father and the son.

When we feel excluded from something it is, perhaps, because we feel that our right to be included is denied. It is natural for a young child to feel that it is his or her indisputable right to be with his or her parents, to have a special place in their lives. Yet there are many situations in which the child is not involved in adults' lives, and in which he or she becomes a spectator. This is how Paul, a ten-year-old boy recalls his experience of feeling excluded from his parents' enjoyment:

> We were at our friends' house. We were invited over for supper. They were talking about something...I don't know what. Some adult's stuff, you know. I was sitting alone.... I had brought my book with me, but I couldn't really read. Every seven minutes I felt sick.... I didn't have a watch but I felt when seven minutes passed. I felt it in my head. It was like a pain in my head. I wanted to go home but my parents were enjoying themselves so much that they didn't even notice me. I felt alone...and lonely, I guess. I wished time could go faster.

Paul was watching his parents absorbed in a conversation with their friends, a conversation in which there was no room for him. He felt separated from the others, alone and lonely. Not that he felt insecure. He felt like he had no meaning for his parents. He felt forgotten, invisible, almost not existing for them. In his experience, Paul realized the emptiness of the space between himself and his parents. Although his parents were there, Paul felt the loss of connection with them. He lost the sense that he really mattered to them. "The need to matter in the eyes of the other has psychological significance as an aspect of forming a sense of self in relation to the world" (Josselson, 1992, p. 99-100). The overwhelming sense of not belonging to the world of his parents and their friends prevented Paul of creating his own world in which he could enjoy himself. He could not read the book that he had brought along. He could not find anything else to do. He could not be with himself either. His only desire was to speed up the time so he could go home where he could be again together with his parents. But is this loneliness? Perhaps it is.

Loneliness is a feeling that changes our entire lifeworld. In loneliness we see ourselves

disconnected, separated from the surrounding world--we no longer have the sense of integrity with it. Yet the sense of being separated or even excluded from the familiar flow of the family's life that a young child may experience because he or she is hiding something from the parents, is different. This is how Tom, a colleague of mine, recalls his experience of hiding from his parents the fact that he broke a pot:

> When I was five or six, I broke a pot that sat on a table in the living room. I can't recall how I actually broke the pot, and can only infer my initial shock at seeing it burst on the floor, the plant and the soil in it suddenly scattered. I could see that the pot wouldn't go back together, although the pieces were all there. I acted quickly to tidy everything up. The swept up soil goes into the flower bed under the big window and I pick up the ceramic pieces-the pathetic plant too- and take them all the way across the road to the weeds by the river bank. Now I can only wait. I'm hoping that Mom won't notice because I don't know what to do if she asks me about it.
>
> The first minutes and hours after Mom's return are heavy and awkward with dread. I do my best to appear nonchalant, unchanged. By all measures the day may look very ordinary-supper getting ready, older brothers (now home) occupied with minor squabbles, Dad coming in from work-yet I feel increasingly removed and alone. When it happens, even the inevitable question about the pot is strangely muted: Mom casually remarks to someone that a plant seems to be missing. Some distance away, I stop what I'm doing and listen closely, making sure not to look in her direction-I'm afraid to catch my Mother's eyes. Beyond the slight tone of puzzlement in her voice there is nothing to encourage alarm, however. Soon after it is raised the matter is dropped. Nobody but me seems to care.
>
> As days pass, the empty space in the living room where the pot sat seems less ominous, and my feelings are less and less prone to shrinking from my secret. Almost without noticing it, I feel normal around Mom again. Once again I'm back to myself.

For Tom keeping the secret from his parents was an experience that created distance between him and his parents. The secret forced him into isolation. He had a growing sense of separation from the other members of the family. He felt removed and alone. The secret created boundaries between Tom and the others in the family which disturbed the habitual closeness in their relationships. He tried to appear relaxed but he felt uneasy around his mother trying to be busy with something and not to look at her. Not only did his secret create

boundaries between him and the other members of the family, but it also created a new world for Tom--a world to which he alone had an access. Simmel (1970) suggests that the keeping of secrets is one of the greatest achievements of human beings: The secret produces an immense enlargement of life. The experience of secrecy offers the reality of a much more complex human life experience: "the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world; and the latter is decisively influenced by the former" (p 330).

We can see from Tom's experience that from the moment the secret happened to him and he decided to keep it he began to live in two worlds. Moreover, this second world deeply influenced the primary reality. All his gestures, words, his position in the room--everything paralleled the world of his secret. He was torn apart between those two worlds. He could not find a way to be with himself in the world of his secret. But he could not be with his family either. He was alone in those two worlds in which he had to live simultaneously. Is this loneliness? Perhaps it is.

Yet Tom's feeling alone, removed from the rest of the family, is different from Paul's feeling forgotten, excluded from his parents' conversation with their friends. It would be very simplistic if we start looking at the differences between the "causes" of these feelings, or at the question "whose at 'fault' for the happening?" Perhaps to understand how it is possible for these different experiences to bring about loneliness feelings, we need not only to understand the worlds of these children but most of all to understand that there are different modes of existence of the loneliness feeling.

It is not unusual to see a child who observes from a distance a group of other children playing a game, talking and laughing in a small circle. This scene can be seen at school, in the neighbourhood, at a summer camp. There is something peculiar to the children who are in the circle. Their heads and hands close together, their bodies feeling comfortable in such a near proximity, their eyes sparkling, and their stealthy gestures seem to create an intimate atmosphere from which anyone else feels excluded. There is also something peculiar to the child who observes the scene from a distance. We could see the child who is observing the others being almost motionless but his or her body is not relaxed--it is rather stiff instead. Perhaps the eyes of such a child are the most mobile part of his or her body. The child's eyes are following from a distance every single movement of the others who are in a group. There is desire, there is awaiting, there is sadness in the child's eyes. This is how Mina, a ten-year-old girl, recalls her experience of being a spectator of the other children's play:

> It was recess time. I was watching everyone else playing and having a good time while I was alone and extremely lonely. I just walked around and watched the others... They were playing a game and seemed so busy talking.

> laughing... I couldn't hear what they were saying but it must have been something very funny. I wished I were one of them. I felt unwanted, unneeded ... I thought that no one likes me.

Mina felt excluded, misplaced, separated from the other children's world--the cheerful world of play. The world of play is a shared one. It requires and it creates a sense of togetherness. And this sense of togetherness does not consist just in doing things together or behaving "playfully." In the world of play, the sense of togetherness represents itself through the boundaries of shared meanings of the things set by their use in play. Perhaps the true being of play can come to life only if the players intentionally let themselves be dissolved in the spirit of play. In the world of play, however, the sense of togetherness represents itself not only through the boundaries of shared meanings but also through the boundaries of shared space.

Mina was excluded from the world of shared meanings--she did not know what the other children were saying. While remaining ignorant of whatever amusing matters were shared, she was observing from a distance the gestures, the laughter, the smiling faces and glowing eyes of the other children. She realized that not only did she not share the space with the others, but that there was also space between her and the others. If there were no space between her and the others she would not be able to observe what they were doing. One cannot observe from a distance while being involved in the scene. Not only could she observe the others; she could also "see" herself standing alone, apart from the others who were united. She felt unwanted, unneeded. Yet her desire to belong to the "magic" of their shared world kept her on the place where she was standing. She did not go away. She was walking around watching them instead. She was just there. Perhaps Mina's "just being there" was a silent plea to the others. Perhaps she was waiting for someone to say, "Do you want to play?" By just being there she made herself vulnerable to the others. Her "just being there" was an appeal. But Mina's silent appeal was not heard by the others who remained indifferent and exclusive. She was alone and extremely lonely.

Perhaps the most painful loneliness comes to us not when we are alone, but when we are in the presence of others. We feel separated, excluded, cut off from the shared world of the others. But we are not at peace with our inner life-world either. The desire to belong to the others' shared world, the world outside ourselves, on the one hand, and the impossibility of reaching this desire on the other hand, creates a vacuum not only between us and the others but most of all inside ourselves. Is this the inner emptiness that we feel when we are lonely among others?

Closing Remarks

Reflecting on the child's experience of separation and of loneliness feeling has become the

occasion to attempt to grasp the essential meaning of not only the most traumatic events in my own and my son's childhood, but of different situations in young children's lives which bring about loneliness feelings. The process of phenomenological reflection has helped me to better understand the importance of the way in which adults, and most of all parents, are present in child's life. Perhaps each young child experiences differently his or her parents' physical presence or absence. Perhaps these experiences differ also from one particular situation to another. But in spite of differences in our deep fears, we experience our parents as the solid ground, the home of our existence which is never completely lost. Even Ruth, the young girl in Robinson's novel Housekeeping (1980) whose mother has abandoned her in suicide, was still living in hope, in waiting for "a mystery."

> A child whose mysterious expectation has been betrayed must learn to deal with a fundamental archetype of human existence: the experience of the vulnerable centre, the broken whole, the neglected hearth, the absent Other. (van Manen, 1990, p. 90)

Yet the physical presence of the parent is not always experienced by the child as togetherness. It is not only the physical separation that lets a child be vulnerable to the loneliness feeling; it is rather the lack of the sense of relatedness that makes loneliness possible even in the presence of the child's parents.

When we are lonely we feel separated from those who we love although we are not necessarily physically separated from them. When the individuals are physically separated they are disconnected, kept or forced apart for some reason. In the experience of loneliness, however, the feeling of separateness stands as an opposite to relatedness and not as an expression of a physical separation. The surrounding world changes its appearance in the experience of loneliness, although it does not become chaotic like in the experience of separation. Perhaps in contrast to the experience of separation, what really changes in the experience of loneliness is not the surrounding world, but rather our being in the world.

CHAPTER 6
LONELINESS AND BOREDOM

Introduction

Harper (1967), in his book The Seventh Solitude states that "Aloneness is not always an agony, it is often boredom" (p. 144). He suggests that some humans are bored because they have never had a vision of life beyond what passes them; they have no sense of life as either purposeful or mysterious. There are others, however, who "are bored because they have a vision of something beyond or beneath the appearances but have grown tired waiting for what never reveals itself" (Harper, 1967, p. 144). He sees the latter boredom to be akin to despair, and if it is not actually an agony, it is only because even agony usually becomes weary and listless. Further, Harper (1967), who discusses the spiritual homelessness and solitude in the writings of Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, points out that human loneliness and boredom are the main themes in Kierkegaard's writings. The sense of nothingness, of absence, of the extinction of human capacity penetrates Kierkegaard's writings about boredom. "Boredom, extinction, is precisely a continuity in nothingness" (Kierkegaard, 1844/1980, Concept 133, cited in Spacks, p. 233).

Mijuskovic (1979) suggests that there is a fundamental connection between loneliness and boredom, indeed, that "solitude in its less intense form manifests itself as what we experience as ennui" (Mijuskovic, 1979, p. 96). He points out that the experience of ennui is a state of consciousness which seems to depend on our reflexive awareness of the "nothingness" of consciousness. Boredom on the other hand, according to Mijuskovic, is "really just the growing awareness of nothingness," (p. 20) and is a state of consciousness that resembles loneliness in all aspects except intensity. Apparently Mijuskovic uses boredom and ennui as synonyms (like he does with loneliness and solitude, as mentioned earlier). Thus, in boredom as well as in ennui we are "self-aware of our nothingness, we confront a meaningless, impassive universe that cares not whether we exist or no, a realm of material being that offers neither guidance nor solace" (Mijuskovic, 1979, p. 96).

The experience of ennui, however, is not seen by all authors as equivalent to the experience of boredom (Gaylin, 1979, Klapp, 1986, Kuhn, 1976). Kuhn (1976) distinguishes ennui from more ordinary sorts of boredom. He defines ennui as estrangement, as a feeling of meaningless or emptiness of the world. He emphasizes that ennui is not easily attributed to a particular situation, but is chronic, a sense of worldweariness or meaningless of life. Ennui involves both body and soul and thus it is spiritual as well as physical. According to Kuhn (1976), ennui is also independent of will so it seizes a person who becomes "helpless."

Gaylin (1979) believes that in ennui a person is captivated by a melancholy languor. He

suggests that the monotonous flow of life brings about the feeling of ennui which "seems almost the absence of any feeling-as does depression" (p. 116-117). Perhaps the poem Monotony by C. P. Cavafy (1975) is one of the most brilliant insights about the feeling of ennui as defined by Gaylin.

> One monotonous day follows another
> identically monotonous. The same things
> will happen to us again and again,
> the same moments come and go.
>
> A month passes by, brings another month.
> Easy to guess what lies ahead:
> all of yesterday's boredom.
> And tomorrow ends up no longer like tomorrow.

But does a young child experience the monotonous flow of the days, one after another, in the same way as adults do? It seems that the notion of monotony is inherently connected to the notion of succession and the duration of physical time. The notion of monotony implies an ability to "see" the flow of life in a more or less "metric" rather than qualitative manner. However, as mentioned earlier, what is most important for young children is the quality of time, its experiential content. Young children live with time, not abstract time but lived time of the things and the world as they experience them. Perhaps that is why it is common among young children "to confuse age with height-as if aging were tantamount to growing" (Piaget, 1971, p. 219). Time, which is viscerally felt in the things and in routines of the house, and which exists through different events that follow certain order, gives young children a sense of directionality and security. For an adult, the daily repetition of certain routines may be seen as a monotonous flow of life, but for a young child the "monotony" of life is perhaps the "solid ground" that assures the child's very existence.

Klapp (1986) believes that unlike ennui all ordinary boredom is trapped in some way in a situation--it occurs when "we are forced to give attention to a situation providing too little of what we are interested in-or too much of what we are not interested in" (p. 36). Gaylin (1979) suggests that boredom is the opposite of interest, the opposite of involvement, the opposite of engagement. He points out that the feeling of boredom is in response to the value of life, life which is presumed to supply pleasure and have worth.

> When we begin to get anxious about our potential for a pleasure or purpose in survival, we become bored. Boredom, then, is a mobilization for action against the absence of pleasure. (Gaylin, 1979, p. 199)

Thus Gaylin sees boredom as a call that is often said out loud even when, as is more likely in boredom, we are alone. He suggests that even if it is not actually articulated, our "I am so

bored!" is not a passive statement; it is a call for change and alternation. He believes, therefore, that in contrast with ennui, boredom is a sharp, almost resentful feeling that motivates us to search for something that would allow us to escape from our boredom.

Perhaps it is true that aloneness is often boredom as Harper (1965) suggests, but the fact that we may feel bored while alone does not imply that boredom "is a state of consciousness which resembles loneliness in all its aspects except intensity" (Mijuskovic, 1979, p. 20). Being alone and feeling lonely is only one of the many modes of existence of loneliness and thus it seems unconvincing that boredom, in all its modes of existence, is just a moderate form of loneliness. Yet, it is possible that the experience of boredom and the experience of loneliness overlap or exist in an alternating mode. The question therefore is not "Is boredom a less intense form of loneliness?" but "How does the experience of boredom stand phenomenologically to the experience of loneliness?" In respect to the present study, however, the main question of interest in this chapter is "How does the child's experience of boredom stand phenomenologically to his or her experience of loneliness?"

Having Nothing to Do

> I remember once when I was six-years old and I had just come to Canada. It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon. I was going to start school on Monday. I had no friends except a boy that was going to be in my school. But that day he went to his friend's house. Only me and my mom were at home. My dad was at work. It was warm outside, no clouds, birds chirping. But I had nothing to do. My mom was working on her book. She was a student back then and she had a lot to read. She didn't have much time to play with me. I don't have any brothers or sisters and the only person that I had to play with was my mom. I was just sitting there waiting... waiting for her to come out of her room to play with me.

Was John bored? He seemed to be. The beautiful sunny, warm Saturday afternoon did not encourage him to go outside and play. He did not even consider such an option. He could see the cloudless sky, he could hear the birds chirping but this joyful world was outside. John did not have a sense of belonging to the outside world; it had no meaning for him. He had just come to Canada--a new, unknown place. Perhaps in his homeland the beauty and joyfulness of the outside world would invite John to do many different and enjoyable things. In the new place, however, the outside world, although beautiful, remained still and remote. It did not "speak" to him. It seems that the only reason for John to remember how beautiful it was outside was that the outside world was in a contrast with his own lifeworld.

John's world at home was also new for him. Perhaps he did not feel "at home" yet. But his

new home did not "invite" John to explore its secrets. He felt that there was nothing to do. John did not recall making any attempt to find something to do. He was just sitting there waiting for his mother to find time to play with him. But is this boredom? If it were boredom, why did it not manifest itself as a call for action? Why did he stay still waiting? Is John's experience an experience of ennui? Ennui, as Gaylin (1979) suggests, is "the resigned acceptance of a pleasureless and meaningless existence-the ultimate giving up on ourselves as a source of pleasure" (p. 199). In John's experience, however, there is no sign of an emerging sense of meaningless to life or an impending lack of confidence in himself as a "source of pleasure." Children as young as John do not seem to have a concept of the meaning of life. Very young children live in the present moment which is almost unrelated to the past or the future. How long ago was yesterday? When will it be tomorrow? I remember trying to explain to my four-year-old son that he needed to wait until tomorrow to go to his friend's birthday party. After a few minutes he asked me, "Is it tomorrow yet, mommy?" For the child time is "here and now," and so is life. It seems then that the meaning of life cannot be of any concern for a young child since life is experienced fully through almost any body movement and interactions with others. Young children cannot detach themselves from the daily existence and start visualizing themselves as worthless creatures occupied with meaningless activities whose ultimate purpose is belied by the fact that all life ends with unavoidable terminus of death. For a young child, therefore, it seems unlikely to experience ennui as a realization of the absence of meaning in life. Skipping joyfully up and down the stairs ten or twenty times is a very meaningful occupation for a young child. It is pleasure that perseveres in a present. For an adult, in a contrast, even the thought of going up and down the stairs several times would be meaningless and perhaps boring. But the young child can skip up and down the stairs while imagining many different things. The stairs may become a mountain or a bumpy slide. It seems that even the most ordinary things in a home reveal themselves differently to the child. For most adults the stairs are stairs and nothing more. But each and every object may invite the child in a different way than it does the adult--the child's world is a world of unlimited possibilities for enjoyment. Even the young child's own body offers limitless possibilities for diversion. It is always fascinating for me to observe a baby completely absorbed for hours playing with his or her toes. The younger the child, the greater is the pleasure of discovering his or her body. And the more the child comes to know his or her body's ability to explore the world, the more enjoyable the world becomes. A young child, therefore, cannot ultimately give up on himself or herself as a source of pleasure.

Yet John seemed to be unable to find a meaningful and engaging occupation while waiting for his mother. His own capacity for interest seemed to cease. Perhaps John was overwhelmed

with so many novelties in his new world which, instead of nurturing his curiosity, reduced his willingness to explore. It is not difficult to assume that John's parents bought some new, and supposedly exciting toys, for him prior to or shortly after his arrival to Canada. But he did not mention them --they were not an option to consider. Spacks (1995) suggests that "'Foreign objects' can indeed help sufferers from tedium-but only if they know how to use them properly, if they treat elements of their environment as opportunities for action" (p. 40). John's coming to Canada was a sudden change in his life in the sense of continuity and order. He had lost the connection to the surrounding world. Or better, he had not established a connection with that new world yet. It was only his mother who provided him the feeling of security and relatedness to that too big and too unfamiliar world. And only his mother's participation could make his exploration of that world safe and enjoyable.

It is not unusual for young children, however, to have moments when they do not know what to do even in their familiar environments (or especially in their familiar environments). "What shall I do now?" is a question familiar to all parents' ears. There are moments when young children need their parents' suggestions to guide their exploration of the environment. Perhaps there are times when children's natural curiosity is challenged in the well known world of home. But of what does the question "What shall I do now?" speak?

What Shall I Do Now, Mom?

A few weeks ago my ten-year-old son, who recently moved to a new school, invited his best friend from the old school and neighbourhood to come over to our house. The boys had not seen each other for a while and both of them seemed to really enjoy being together again. Almost breathless from laughter they could hardly eat their snacks. I could not understand what they were laughing about but I really enjoyed just listening to their pure and unfeigned laughter--a laughter, I thought, that only children can have. I became quite joyful myself and even went back to my own childhood thinking about the magic of friendship. The boys, who by that time somehow managed to finish their snacks, went downstairs to play computer games. Apparently they continued to enjoy themselves since I could hear their laughter even from the basement. Not more than twenty minutes later, they were back in my son's room building a castle from Lego. But they did not finish it. They had changed their minds and wanted to play Nintendo. I did not have my watch on but it seemed to me less then ten minutes after they started playing Nintendo when they asked me if I could put up the ping-pong table so they could play. I refused to do so because it was already dark and too cold to play in the garage. I told them that there were plenty of things that they could do inside and that there was no real need to go in the garage to play ping-pong. They made "long faces" and went back to my son's room. Not long after that they decided that there was a cartoon show on the television

that they wanted to see. I agreed and they turned on the television. A few minutes later when I went to see why it was so quiet in the room I realized that only Peter, my son, was interested in the show. His friend had found Peter's Game Boy and started playing silently sitting on the floor. I left them with the hope that Peter would eventually give up his cartoon show and use the time that his friend had left to really be with him. I started fixing dinner with a strange heaviness in my heart. I could hear that the T.V. was on but nothing else for a half an hour--no conversation, not even a single word. As soon as the show finished the boys came out of Peter's room. "Mom, what shall we do now?" I could not answer immediately. I was afraid that if I did my voice would betray me.

Was my son's question a plea for help? And if it were what did he need my help for? When he was three- or four years old he hardly ever asked me what to do. He was always busy exploring all the wonderful contents of the cupboards, drawers, and storage places in the house. Of course there were occasions when all the available possibilities were exhausted or at least they seemed to him to be exhausted. It was incredible how even a simple-minded suggestion could involve him for considerable periods of time. Did he really need my suggestions again? With age, he gradually became quite independent in making choices about how to use his time. He, being an only child, has developed his ability to discover his own interests and his capacity for new interests has grown substantially over the years. My son, like most of the pre- teenagers is even more independent when his friends are with him. His "Mom, what shall we do now?" was a question that spoke beyond itself. Did he really not know what to do with his best friend? If the boys really needed me to tell them what to do, then it is apparent that they felt that they had exhausted all the available possibilities for enjoyment. Was that question a sign of an "early death of curiosity," as a cause of boredom. (Gaylin, 1979, p. 126)? But how could they possibly feel bored while there was a vast variety of computer and video games that they love and could play? Yet despite that variety the boys apparently were bored.

> Variety, also, can be boring when it has nothing to say-when it inflicts on us noise, distraction and irrelevance, making it harder to find the meaning we seek. (Klapp, 1986, p. 81)

As I now reflect on the event, I can see that the variety offered by the numerous games did not provide the boys with anything new. Or better, the "new" elements in each game were only slight variations of the same pattern of playing actions which were constantly repeated in each game. Klapp (1986) suggests that to recognize a thing as new, "one must be able to distinguish it from what is old" (p. 81). Thus the lack of real novelty prevented the boys from finding any of the activities that they undertook enjoyable. The variety, therefore, did not really

exist; what appeared on the surface to be variety was redundancy. Redundancy, however, seemed to be only part of the picture. What was deficient was perhaps not the absence of real variety, but the absence of significant meaning in the trite variety. All the movements of the games or cartoons' characters, all the sounds accompanying the movements did not have a real message for the two boys; instead, they were meaning-defeating. Thus the variety that I was convinced was enough for the boys to choose from was so shallow, so empty and meaningless that it brought about the feeling of boredom. But what made me feel the most sorrowful was that the boys were not able to find a way to really be with and for each other. Spacks (1995) suggests that "human beings provide the fundamental locus of interest" (p. 221), yet the two boys remained captives of the environment. And that environment no longer nourished them perhaps because whatever it provided, though quickly shared, did not extend the relation beyond the moment.

Reflecting on the happening now, I see that I was not feeling only sorry for the boys. I felt perhaps a bit angry too. A comparison between the opportunities for entertainment that I, as a child, had and the opportunities that my son has now, inevitably came to my mind. Children from my generation and in my small communist country had fewer entertainment opportunities than children from my son's generation who live in contemporary Western societies. Television sets were not existing in most of the homes, computers and interactive video and electronic games were not existent at all. Yet I, as a child, very seldom complained about being bored. I had plenty of time to do anything or nothing by myself. And I felt responsible to "do" something or nothing with that empty time. In most occasions I ended up reading a book, looking at the flowers or birds in the garden, or just staring at the sky out of the window. Perhaps that was the time when I found a way to be with myself. It seems to me that feeling bored with "having nothing to do" is different than having time to "do nothing." The empty or spare time could be time for pure self-reflection, or secret daydreaming.

> Here reflection is not constrained and directed by problems, work, duties, or projects. In fact, one's spirit is allowed to wonder aimlessly since one is so totally bored. (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p. 157)

But do we nowadays, as parents and educators, fully understand the importance of a young person's need for true spare time--time outside of work, study, and pleasure activities? Are we not trying to fill our children's entire time with "something" or even sometimes with "anything" to do? Are we not sometimes more vigorous than our children themselves to sign them up for basketball, piano, drama, tennis lessons, and so on? Are we not trying to teach them to schedule every minute of their lives? Do we ever consider the possibility that by being "good" parents or teachers we may deprive our children of the time they need to come up with things

that are totally self-motivated rather than suggested or organized by adults? Have we not forgotten that many self-initiated activities or projects grow out of sheer boredom?

Perhaps it is time to recapture the lost sense of spare time. Perhaps we need to reconsider the absence of the external distraction simply as a possibility of boredom, and start seeing it as a possibility that opens space for our children's creativity. "Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience. A rustling in the leaves drives him away" (Benjamin, 1969, p. 91).

It Wasn't What I Needed

> It was Saturday afternoon. I was at home proudly looking at my newest Lego set, just built. But something was wrong. I didn't feel happy. Well, I wasn't not happy...just not totally happy. I tried playing with my Lego. It didn't help. I decided to take a quick nap. I hit the bed. I was asleep.
>
> When I woke up I still felt bad. I didn't know what to do. I took my book. It was the book that I was reading for a while and the book was quite interesting, but I just couldn't read it. It wasn't what I needed. I still felt the same empty feeling. I took a walk to my friend Chris' house and back. Then I felt worse. I took out my bike and rode around the block. Half way back to my house I passed my friend Andrew's house. I felt worse. I stuck my face in my pillow. I felt awful. "Wait! That just might be it!" I said aloud, even though no one could hear. I went into the bathroom, picked up the phone, and called my best friend. I asked him to come over and he said "Yes!" When he got home I felt fine again.

Unlike John, Steven's feeling of "something wrong" was a call for action. And unlike my son and his friend, Steven did not seek somebody else's suggestion in his exploration of every possible option with the hope to find something which would fill the emptiness that he felt. But nothing seemed to work. Every new possibility that he explored seemed to be as unsatisfactory as the previous one. He felt worse and worse after each attempt. He could not find what he needed. But what did he really need? Did he need something, anything, that could simply keep him busy? Apparently, "keeping busy" was not what he really needed. If it were possible to fill the emptiness that he felt with any of the things that he usually enjoyed doing, he would not have felt worse after each attempt he made.

It is remarkable how Steven's experience resembles the young Camus' feelings during his visit to Prague when he was twenty-one. In his short essay Death in the Soul Camus wrote:

> Still more afraid of being alone in my hotel room, without money or enthusiasm, reduced to myself and my miserable thoughts....I ran all the way to my hotel, I went to bed, and waited for sleep which came almost at once. [...] I spent the afternoon in a state that would be hard to describe. I lay in my

> bed, thinking of nothing, with a strange heaviness in my heart. I cut my nails. I counted the cracks in the floorboard. "If I can count up to a thousand..." At fifty or sixty I gave up. (Camus, 1968, pp. 40-41)

> Toward the end of the afternoon, broken with weariness, I stared madly at the door handle, endlessly repeating a popular accordion tune in my empty head. At that moment I had gone as far as a I could. I had no more country, city, hotel room, or name.... There was a knock at the door and my friends came in. I was saved. (Camus, 1968, pp. 44, 45, 46)

Apparently, at that particular moment of his life, the young Camus, despite all his extraordinary intellectual capabilities, desperately needed companionship. He was forced to confront himself alone with no support from the outside world. He felt like he was "suffocating surrounded by walls" (Camus, 1968, p. 49). It was his sense of isolation from the rest of the world that fed his boredom, melancholy, and perhaps loneliness.

Of course, to compare Steven's and Camus' experiences would be inappropriate and quite naive. Yet the feelings that creep through both texts are so close that their similarities cannot be ignored. Regardless the differences in the situations in which these people were involved, and regardless of the differences in the age of the people involved, we can feel their desire to overcome the increasing sense of emptiness and meaninglessness. For an outside observer it may seem that the sufferers from boredom could interest themselves in something if only they <u>really</u> <u>tried</u>. Gaylin (1979) suggests that

> Change and alternation-even pretended change, even artificial change-supply a kind of renewal that denies that all is predictable, that all has been experienced, and that there is nothing new under the sun. (Gaylin, 1979, p. 125)

Apparently the simple change was not an antidote to Steven's and to Camus' boredom. Action was not an antidote to their boredom either. Full involvement in any action seemed to be impossible for them. The sense of futility preceded and forestalled endeavour. It was not a change that they really needed. When Steven realized that he did not need "something interesting" to do, but rather he needed to do something "with someone" special, he felt relieved. When he realized that what he needed was his best friend, Steven exclaimed: "Wait! That just might be it!" Camus' hopeful staring at the door handle was rewarded with his friends' arrival. The appearance of his friends gave Camus back his lost sense of pleasure in life. He wrote:

> Life was about to break through. I know what it was: I was ready to happy ....I had not changed, of course. It was simply that I was no longer alone. (Camus, 1968, p. 49)

Thus the arrival of the friend, which seems to liberate the sufferer's self from itself, makes it

possible for the sufferer to be face to face with the world again. "I had not changed, of course," declares Camus. Did the world change instead? Perhaps the presence of a friend changes the appearance of the world; it changes our being in that world too. The remote, empty and pleasureless world becomes close and meaningful for us again. But can we say that we experience the world in the same way when we feel bored as we do when we feel lonely? Perhaps we can. Are we not feeling separated from the surrounding world while lonely? Perhaps we are. Yet, it is my contention that the phenomenological descriptions of the lived experiences of boredom and of loneliness speak of different categories of experiences.

Closing Remarks

In its essence, boredom seems to oppose not our relatedness to the world but our desire for the world. Boredom, as Philips (1993) suggests, presents two impossible options: "there is something I desire, and there is nothing I desire" (cited in Spacks 1995, p. 14). In boredom the desire, whether we desire something or there is nothing we desire, is conditioned outside ourselves. We "typically attribute the causes of boredom to conditions outside ourselves: the tedious meetings we must attend, the dreary classrooms we inhabit" (Spacks, 1995, p. 259). Thus in boredom we feel ourselves acted upon rather than active. While bored we feel alienated from that world which, being empty and meaningless, seems remote and dull. The surrounding world fails to provide us not only with something interesting to do, but with "some-thing" we need.

Yet it is quite possible to become restless and even harsh in our attempts to find "some-thing" that will allow us to escape boredom. Our desire for "some-thing" may manifest itself in a lack of recognition or rejection of others' needs and desires, even of their full reality. Thus in boredom, the desire for outwardly focused interest may be experienced as moral vacuum rather than entitlement. Spacks (1995, p. 231) suggests that boredom implies "no respect for the identity of the other." Boredom as "there is something I desire" may, therefore, become a means of power and control over others. Or for many teenagers in our contemporary society "it can be the deadly excuse defiantly given for binge drinking, stealing cars, or random shooting" (Washington Post, 15 June 1992, cited in Spacks, 1995, p. 260).

But boredom can also announce that one does not care about anything: "there is nothing I desire." Or for someone there is nothing left to desire. In the article entitled "FOR VA. TEENS, EMPTINESS AMID PLENTY," from Washington Post, 8 Dec. 1991 (cited in Spacks, 1995, p. 259-260), it is said:

> Regardless of the money their parents have, the clothes, the houses, the cars, the opportunities at school and the proximity to a major city, they say they are bored out of their minds.

In the experience of loneliness, in contrast, the option that "there is nothing I desire" is not present. In loneliness our desire is to be "with" and "for" someone we love. In loneliness we do not rely on the surrounding world that we feel estranged from to produce something, anything that we can find enjoyable or interesting as so to find a way to escape from our loneliness. It is not the lack of enjoyment that we feel while lonely. It is rather the absence of the significant other that we feel and that makes enjoyment impossible for us. It is true that in the moments of loneliness, like in the moments of boredom, we may feel the lack of intimacy in our relationships with the surrounding world. But while in the state of boredom, we feel the distance between us and the world, in loneliness we realize that there is a space between us and the others--the others that we love and miss. In loneliness we feel the pain from not being able to share ourselves--our thoughts, our truths, our feelings-- with those whom we love. Perhaps in some experiences of boredom, like in Steven's or in Camus' experience, when we become aware of our need to be with someone we love we are no longer bored--we are lonely. In loneliness we are longing for communion; in boredom we may not. It is possible, however, that our longing for communion while we feel lonely, may lead us to seek someone, anyone, to join us and dispel the threat of loneliness, even if the visitor replaces it with boredom.

Nevertheless, although different, the experiences of loneliness and of boredom are not antithetical. They both are important pedagogical ingredients in the shaping of the child's social identity and the formation of inner self. Questions of the pedagogy of children's loneliness feelings, however, have been hitherto virtually unexplored in the social and human sciences.

CHAPTER 7

THE PEDAGOGY OF LONELINESS

Introduction

> Your children are not your children.
> They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
> They come through you but not from you,
> And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
> You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
> For they have their own thoughts.
> You may house their bodies but not their souls. ("On Children", Gibran, 1923/1973, p. 17)

The pedagogy of loneliness is a fundamental moral question regarding our moment to moment living with children in the contemporary fractured world--a world in which families are less stable, divorce is commonplace, neighbourhoods tend to be more in flux and less community minded, schools are less personal and more competitive, and peer groups set up conflicting loyalties. The pedagogy of loneliness in children's lives, therefore, raises the issue of the ethical responsibility of the adult for the manner in which young people are subjects of loneliness in various social settings.

There used to be American Native tribes that sent their young men out to live alone in the wilderness for a considerable time as part of their initiation into adulthood. It was important that the young braves should learn to master the tools of survival they would need on long hunting trails, but it was also essential that each man should come to terms with his own personality and his own fears in order to able to work alone and withstand himself alone. Only the man who was able to survive alone was considered able to work harmoniously within adult society. "In other words, only the man who did not strictly need people, whatever his preference, could be one of the people" (Kurtz, 1983, p. 38). It seems, therefore, that the ability to be alone was considered by the American Native tradition to be a young person's way to both independence and belonging.

Have we not forgotten this old wisdom? Do we not see the child's aloneness as an indication of social failure? Are we not too concerned about our children playing alone? Have we not forgotten how, in our struggle for independence, we needed to master our ability to stand apart from society in order to find our own roles and places within a specific context? Was it not this ability that was necessary for everyone in order to become a part of this society? Do we really understand how children experience the complexity of our society? Can

anyone become a person if one never asks oneself the eternal question "Who am I?", and to ask it alone?

Of course, I do not advocate that we, as adults, should leave our children alone so they can develop their own unique personalities, but rather that children should be granted privacy virtually from the "beginning" of their consciousness which will strengthen them and allow them to develop their own thoughts and to discover their own "souls." Only then can they learn to enjoy the richness and the depth of their own selves in solitude, and sustain fearlessly the pain of loneliness.

Naturally, our society has changed since the American Native tribes sent their young men out to live alone in the wilderness, and to learn to sustain themselves alone. The "wilderness" in our lives is of a different variety--in our "wilderness" we are perpetually jostled not by wild animals but by strangers who often bring changes and uncertainty in our lives.

> Unlike the age when one knew, by being born in a particular social niche, what one was expected to become, whom one could count on, what one could do, present-day children must live with uncertainty. (van Manen, 1991, p. 3)

The uncertainty that contemporary children face, however, does not necessarily mean that young people, growing up in the world with too many conflicting views, values, and aims, will drift into self-destructive lifestyles. Young people may realize that our uncertain world provides limitless possibilities from which one must make choices and commitments in life. Van Manen (1991) suggests that in contemporary society the child is in a real sense the agent of his or her own destiny at both an individual and a social level. What is our role, then, as parents and educators, in children's personal and educational growth? Can we, in our living with children, still be governed by traditional beliefs, discarded values, old rules, or fixed impositions? Van Manen (1991) believes that the possibility of a new pedagogy of the theory and practice of living with children, which must stand in a relationship of thoughtfulness and openness to children, has come. "The pedagogy of living with children is an ongoing project of renewal in a world that is constantly changing around us and is continually being changed by us" (van Manen, 1991, p. 3).

Perhaps one of the most evident changes in our contemporary world is the existence of overwhelming, free-flowing information which has changed the meaning, physiognomy, and value of human relations. On the one hand, this information makes it possible for people all around the world, who have equal access to it, to liquidate all the remaining boundaries and barriers and thus to form an immense "union" bigger than ever before. On the other hand, in this "union" the intimacy of human immediate communication, the intimacy of human relations is somehow lost. We spend longer and longer hours alone "communicating" with and through

computers, fax machines, e-mail, and so on. We require more and more privacy in our lives. Can we seek privacy without "risking" loneliness? Perhaps we cannot. Living in a world where the environment becomes more and more technological, and where privacy is a requirement, opens up the possibility of loneliness. The question, therefore, that we, as parents and educators, should ask ourselves, becomes "What can we do in order to better equip our children for their inheritance--the social alienation that results from the "technologization of the human consciousness" (Suransky, 1982, p. 189)? And how can we be successful in our pedagogical attempts when we have not been "taught" how to live in this rapidly changing world? We are even less prepared for the world of tomorrow--the world that our children will live in. As Kahlil Gibran (1923/73) beautifully expressed it: "For their [children's] souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams" (p. 17).

How can we, on the one hand, foster our children's sense of agency in their own destinies so they can come to terms with their possibilities and, on the other hand give them the sense of belonging and unity? Can we simultaneously "hold on to" and "let go" of our children? Perhaps we need to better understand that to become independent, a person needs to develop his or her own ability to observe, to think, and to make discoveries in solitude.

> Thinking, existentially speaking, is a solitary but not a lonely business; solitude is that human situation in which I keep myself company. Loneliness comes about when I am alone without being able to split up into the two-in-one, without being able to keep myself company...or, to put it differently, when I am one and without company. (Arendt, 1978, p. 185)

As discussed earlier solitude is not a way around loneliness--it is often a way through loneliness. It seems then that loneliness feelings are commonly inherent in the very process of becoming a person. And it is perhaps through the experience of loneliness and of solitude that a child learns to be with oneself, to become oneself. In coming apart from others a person is able to gain a strong sense of his or her own identity, becomes more self-sufficient, and less dependent on others. But the capacity to be alone in solitude, although linked with self-discovery and self-realization, is a long and sometimes painful learning process. Robin Lee Graham (1972), who was a teenager when he sailed alone around the world, suggests that anyone who desires to spend time in solitude needs to begin slowly and first learn to be with him or herself for short periods of time.

Perhaps some children and young people first experience solitude in their secret places; others may come to know it in privacy. Gotesky (1965) sees solitude as the space we need in order to think deeply about things. But do we not think our deepest thoughts in privacy? Solitude seems to be closely tied with the notion of privacy. The very existence of privacy, however, like that of solitude, is connected to others. When we keep private we refuse to let

the other to enter a relation with us. Thus privacy limits or disturbs the access that one person has to another.

> A person who keeps private not only closes off the possibilities of close relationships but also the possibilities of any relation whatsoever. Consequently, the condition of privacy limits or prevents the influence that something or someone may exert in a relation. (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p. 59)

Similarly, solitude allows a person time apart from others in order to explore and discover his or her inner self, and private persona. Solitude, however, does not require privacy; it can be reached in aloneness. In other words, while keeping private we intentionally closed off the possibilities of any relationships; in solitude we may or may not have the intention of preventing others from entering and influencing our lifeworld.

Privacy, therefore, like solitude, implies aloneness. Yet both privacy and solitude are more than simply being alone. Being alone is a neutral state of being which contains a limitless number of possibilities for the person involved. We may choose to be alone, we may be left alone, or we may just happen to be alone in a place if, for example, the others leave the room. But privacy cannot just happen to us--we actively seek privacy. We need our private space to refrain others from interfering in our lives. In our private space the others are kept aside with no opportunity to exercise control over us in a manner that violates our rights to make our own decisions in matters that are personal and intimate. We value our privacy since it provides us with the opportunity to be who we really are. Privacy provides the condition for the development of inner competence and personal identity and thus its pedagogical importance is undeniable. Privacy permits the adult waiting within each child to become. Solitude permits the person to be with oneself, to be in tune with the present moment.

Thus both privacy and solitude have their places in child's development of self and identity formation. But both privacy and solitude are tied differently with the notion of presence and relation to others. Perhaps for a child having privacy has no meaning without the reality of an adult's supervision. Some children have their secret places, other have their secret thoughts. Nevertheless, in their secret places or in their secret thoughts, children prevent adults' from supervising. By being alone in privacy, children learn how to be alone with themselves. In solitude too children learn how make their journey to their inner selves, how to discover it, explore it, and accept it. The sense of peacefulness coming with the child's developing ability to be with himself or herself while alone, in solitude or in privacy, is a serious step toward the child's independence.

It seems, therefore, that there exists an inner connectedness between loneliness, in all its modes of existence, and privacy on the one hand, and the presence and relation to others, on

the other. In respect to the present study, the focus of this chapter will be the pedagogical importance of the dialectic between children's need for privacy and adults' supervision (as the most common mode of presence in young children's lives) in regard to children's loneliness.

Lack of Privacy, Loneliness, and Supervision

It is well known and accepted that toward the end of elementary school, and in junior high- and high school, children enter a new stage in their development--a stage when they develop the ability to reflect on a whole new range of possibilities regarding values, meanings, memories, and life choices (Piaget, 1967). It is not surprising for parents to see signs like "Do not enter," or "Private!!!" on the doors of their children's rooms.

Yet we, as parents and educators, sometimes tend to disregard younger children's needs and rights for privacy. As I recall my first years of teaching in a preschool in communist Bulgaria, where the children attended a full-day program and stayed overnight three times a week, I now realize that they were completely deprived of privacy. They lived together and did everything together away from their parents five days a week. They had no toys or books of their own. They had to share everything. They were never alone. They were constantly involved in activities with others; they were constantly supervised. Did we really expect them to be "happy" in that artificially created environment? Were we, as teachers, prepared to assume the responsibilities of "in loco parentis" (van Manen, 1991)? Could we, or better, should we, fulfil all roles--parents, adult relatives, grandparents, siblings, and so on--so the children could restore the lost sense of participation in life? Were the children that I taught ever lonely since they were never alone?

Bruno Bettelheim, the author of the book Children of the Dream admits in a conversation with Irma Kurtz that when he was a child in the Israeli kibbutz, he was lonely all the time although constantly surrounded by people.

> When I was a child here we all lived together away from our parents in dormitories. We did everything together, and if you went off alone, people wondered what was wrong with you. Lonely? I was lonely all the time. (Kurtz, 1983, p. 35)

It seems then that children who are overcrowded, who are never alone even in their bedroom, are neither "cured" of loneliness nor are they "less" lonely. Existence without privacy, possessions, or personal pride cannot "make" a person less lonely than another who lives alone behind locked doors. The question, therefore, becomes: How much supervision and how much privacy do we need to grant our children so they will not feel left alone while having enough space to develop their personal identity? Perhaps this is one of the most fundamental pedagogical questions for which, unfortunately, we still have no answer.

Van Manen and Levering (1996) suggest that there is tension between privacy, on the one hand, and supervision or control on the other. They point out that both are pedagogically important and indispensable.

> Supervision (in the general sense of "watching" one's children) is necessary since it provides the basis for the pedagogical responsibility and accountability of the adult. (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p. 150)

The authors further point out the importance of the attentiveness and watchfulness implicit in supervision since it provides support and gives direction to the child's development. However, the complete supervision and control over the child's inner and outer space is not only undesirable but impossible.

Lack of Supervision and Loneliness

If we confuse supervision in the general sense as suggested by van Manen and Levering (1996) with supervision in its more narrow meaning (for example, keeping discipline at home or at school), it would be impossible to uncover the complexity of the relationship between the lack of supervision and loneliness. What does lack of supervision mean? If we accept that supervision is "watching one's children," and that it should be "someone" who "watches" the children, then the lack of supervision means at least two things. First, there is no one to "watch one's children," and second, this "someone," although there, does not "watch one's children." To consider the first option means to see the lack of supervision as simply an absence (not physically present) of a person such as a parent, teacher, or other adult charged with certain "supervisional duties" at home, school, or youth centre. It seems to me, however, that in respect to the phenomenon of children's loneliness it is essential for us, as parents and educators, to also consider the second option (there is someone who does not watch the children). In its broader sense the lack of supervision means not only an absence of a person whose duty is to provide supervision, but also lack of pedagogical attentiveness and watchfulness; the lack of ability to really "see" and understand the children that one supervises. By considering this option, I believe, we will have a better opportunity to broaden our understanding of the meaning of supervision in relation to the phenomenon of children's loneliness.

The lack of supervision as an absence of a person responsible for providing supervision, and its relation to children's loneliness, is perhaps best represented in the phenomenon of the latchkey child. Latchkey children have traditionally been described as youngsters who carry their own door key. In many instances such children must lock the door of their homes as they leave for school in the morning. Others need the key to let themselves into an empty house or apartment at the end of the school day. But some of these children do both--leave from and

return to an empty home.

> Coming home to an empty apartment is no fun. At least before Tom, my big brother, took a job sacking groceries at Kroger's I had someone to do things with. I liked to watch him work on his old car. Even if we fuss a lot and he felt that an 11-year-old kid is too young to help, it was good to have someone around.
>
> I never knew that our house was so big until I had to start coming home before Mom gets off work. I stay in the living room because I seem to hear noises in the other rooms. Even [though] I am in 3rd grade I am scared. I hear of the terrible things that happen to people staying alone.
>
> I hate being sick - that means I have to stay home by myself. Mom can't afford to miss work to stay with me and besides that if she misses many days she'll lose her job.
>
> "I'm home Mom, and I've locked the door behind me - I'll watch TV till you get here!" I'm really proud that I can stay by myself - Mom really depends on me. It gets awfully tiresome though - I'd like to play outside or have friends over but we have a rule against that. (Storman & Duff, 1982)

Coming home to an empty apartment is not only "no fun"--it is also frightening and lonely. Perhaps entering an empty apartment or house does not have the common meaning of "coming home"--coming to a place that is familiar, intimate, safe. Can a latchkey child feel "coming home" in a place where there is no one else? Perhaps for a latchkey child coming to an empty home has a bitter sense of entering a shelter--a place less dangerous than the outside world, yet foreign and unable to provide a full protection. It is not the walls that give a child the sense of "at homeness" and protection--it is the presence of an adult who cares that can transform the sense of entering a shelter to a feeling of coming home. But it is not only the lack of a sense of protection that a latchkey child experiences as he or she enters the empty house. It is the overwhelming sense of loneliness, of being left alone in the world, that is perhaps more painful than the sense of insecurity and the fear of strangers who may break in. What is the meaning of home if there is no one there to welcome you back, to accept you for who you are without judging you, to forgive you? Can a child become at home in the world if he or she cannot feel "at home" in his or her home? Can such a child still have a childhood?

Unfortunately, the experience of leaving or entering an empty house is an everyday reality for so many children in our contemporary society. It is a painful reality for many "latchkey parents" too, who are concerned for their children's safety. They anxiously await their children's telephone calls--calls that confirm their children are home. But can such telephone

conversations, usually filled with parents' advice for extreme caution when being alone, replace a parent's smile at the door? It cannot. Yet latchkey children are perhaps "a step ahead" of children who receive supervised care in the development of independence. Perhaps latchkey children are more self-reliant, and have a more mature view of their interdependent relationships with their parents. Some of them, like the eleven-year-old boy who described his experience of being a latchkey child, may even be proud of themselves since their ability to stay by themselves allows their parents to make a living. But do we really understand the price that our children pay for their too early independence? Do we honestly believe that our children are prepared for independence at the age of 6, 7 or 8? Perhaps those of us who understand the "cost" of such early independence do not. But having to work outside home for many of us is rarely a matter of choice--it is a necessity in our highly demanding world.

Yet, I believe, we, as parents, do have a choice in selecting our ways of being with our children. In other words, it is our choice and our responsibility to maintain a pedagogical relation with our children despite the reality of our inability to always be physically present in their daily lives. Van Manen (1991) suggests that the pedagogical relation is best described as that between the parent and the child, or between the professional educator and the student when that relation is pregnant with certain qualities.

> The pedagogical relation is an intentional relationship between an adult and a child, in which the adult's dedication and intentions are the child's mature adulthood. It is a relation oriented toward the personal development of the child - this means that the pedagogue needs to be able to see the present situation and experiences of the child and value them for what they contain; and the pedagogue needs to be able to anticipate the moment when the child can participate in the culture with fuller self-responsibility. (van Manen, 1991, p. 75)

Not every situation, therefore, in which we as adults find ourselves with children is a pedagogical situation, nor is each relation that we have with our children pedagogical. To have a pedagogical relation with our children we must be together in an interactive unity. In other words, if the care and supervision that many children receive lacks parents' and teachers' genuine attentiveness the situation is not pedagogical. The lack of genuine interest in the child, therefore, reduces supervision to mere physical presence of an adult--a presence that could vary from neutral to passively abusive. One end of this mere physical presence of an adult--the neutral presence--does not open space for the child's personal growth. It does not "assure" privacy for the child to discover his or her unique inner self since privacy for a child has no meaning without supervision. The other end of this possibility--the passively abusive presence of an adult--suppresses the child's personal growth. By being totally indifferent to what the child does, says, hears, or watches, by neglecting the child's need for love, attention and

recognition, passively abusive presence of an adult, prevents the child from realizing his or her full potential. Either end of possibilities of the adult's mere physical presence in a child's life, however, do not provide the basis for the pedagogical responsibility and accountability of the adult. Thus the mere physical presence of an adult has no pedagogical importance in children's lives. On the contrary,

> Children of neglect more easily become victims of life's contingency - they may drift into exploitative relations of emotional dependency as a result of a need for the love and affection that they never experienced in their childhood. (van Manen, 1991, p. 78)

Apparently, a child of neglect is not "less" lonely than one who leaves from and returns into an empty house. Perhaps such a child is even more vulnerable to the loneliness feeling since the child's entire self and subjective life is rejected. A child, therefore, needs not only a place to "be", but also a place where he or she can feel welcomed, accepted, and understood. Despite that children want to become independent as they grow up and free from supervision, they also want to be supported and "understood" when facing personal problems. What does it mean for a child to feel understood? What does it mean for an adult to understand a child?

The Need for Pedagogical Understanding

Van Manen (1991) suggests that the structure of pedagogical understanding is complex, containing reflective as well as interactive elements. "In other words, it requires of the adult that he or she hold back as well as know how and when to actively engage the child" (van Manen, 1991, p.84). It seems, therefore, that in regard to the question of the pedagogy of loneliness, pedagogical understanding includes our "embodied knowing" of how the competing measures of intimacy and distance should be balanced so the kind of supervision we provide does not deprive our children of privacy, nor does it make them vulnerable to loneliness feeling. Our resourcefulness in pedagogical understanding depends, as van Manen (1991) suggests, on our willingness to perceive and really listen to children, and on the kind of thoughtfulness of which we are capable. It seems then that pedagogical understanding is not possible without a genuine interest in the child as a person. This interest, however, puts us face to face with another dilemma--how to get to know the child's inner self without deliberately digging into his or her inner life--and allowing the child to be "seen" and valued? Perhaps it will be helpful for us in dealing with this dilemma to remember that we want to be "seen" but not "seen through." And to see a child is "to see responsibility, someone in the process of becoming" (van Manen, 1991, p. 1). When we have a genuine interest in the child as a person we are able to become aware of his or her inner life and to get a sense of what things are like for that particular child by not only listening, but also by sensitively observing.

In his book Loneliness and Love, Clark Moustakas (1972) describes how he became aware of an elementary school boy's loneliness. At the beginning Joseph was just one of many new faces during Moustakas weekly visits to an inner-city elementary school in Detroit. Joseph was small, quiet, hidden, and continually sucked his thumb. After "discovering" Joseph, Moustakas was shocked that in the next four weeks not once did another child approach him, speak to him, nor did Joseph ever address any of the other children in the class. His teacher spoke to him a total of three times giving him the same message: "Joseph, take your thumb out of your mouth and sit up straight!" Unlike his teacher, however, Moustakas developed a genuine interest in Joseph. He approached him frequently, sometimes kneeling down close to him, meeting his eyes directly, and waiting for whatever Joseph wished to share with him. Although Joseph was not responding outwardly, Moustakas sensed that something inside was growing. And one day, during lunch recess, Moustakas heard a tapping on the window of the classroom. It was Joseph standing alone, pointing at something in the room. Moustakas was so amazed by Joseph's motioning to him that he had difficulty in focusing on anything but the excitement in Joseph's face.

> At last I saw that he was pointing to a large planter filled with small, green shoots sprouting in rich, black soil. There in the center was a large , tall plant, and Joseph was pointing to it, shyly but with glowing eyes. We stood there for a while admiring his plant as he continued to communicate with gestures, in pantomime, in a real flow of feeling. He was actually smiling, and it was sheer joy being together for the first time. We danced with our eyes, and slowly Joseph came to trust me. (Moustakas, 1972, p. 32)

Undoubtedly Moustakas, unlike Joseph's teacher, not only "discovered" Joseph--he also felt called upon by him. Thus Moustakas gained Joseph's trust not only by showing genuine interest in him as a person, but also by letting Joseph feel that he was prepared to do something for him--something inspired by his trustful sympathy for him. Van Manen (1991) suggests that no quality is more essential for the practice of pedagogical understanding than our capacity for trustful sympathy.

> To have a sympathic capacity means that one is able to discern the subtle signs in a child's voice, glance, gesture, or demeanour. Sympathically we sense what an experience is like for the child, or what mood the child is in - frustrated, stimulated, sad, bored, joyful, adventurous, fearful, gloomy, interested. (van Manen, 1991, p. 97)

Sympathy (literally, with-feelings) presumes that the other person already lives in us, that we recognize the experience of the other person, and orient ourselves to the other with love and care. Moustakas' encounter with Joseph would be impossible if Moustakas did not recognize and respect Joseph's loneliness. Instead of trying to change Joseph, Moustakas respected him

for what he was. Thus Moustakas was able to see Joseph's loneliness not as a "social stigma" but as an essential and vital part of himself. Moustakas' sympathic capacity allowed him to "feel called upon" by Joseph, and to feel that he must act responsively and responsibly to the child. "'Feeling called upon' is therefore the deeper significance, the life meaning of being an educator, a parent, a pedagogue" (van Manen, 1991, p. 97). "Feeling called upon" by a child is more than understanding this child's situation from his or her existential perspective; it is also an ability to act in such a way that the action mediates the influences of the world for the best of the child's personal growth. It also means to have hope for the child--hope that gives us patience and tolerance, belief and trust in the possibilities of our children.

Closing Remarks

Pedagogical understanding is realized in practice through what van Manen (1991) calls "pedagogical tact". Thus pedagogical tact and pedagogical understanding are aspects of the same process. Pedagogical understanding is always concerned with unique and particular circumstances. It is not an abstract, detached form of understanding that must then be translated into particular action. "'Pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact' are not learnable as mere behavioral principles, techniques, or methods" (van Manen, 1991, p. 8-9). Thus in regard to the pedagogical understanding of children's loneliness, we, as pedagogues (parents, teachers, educators), must not expect to be able to apply, in a diversity of situations some "generalized knowledge" about children's loneliness. Nor must we expect to find some universal simplified sets of effective techniques or sure methods for dealing with children who are lonely. Rather, we must be concerned with the uniqueness of each child's experience of loneliness and act tactfully in accordance with our pedagogical understanding of the unique existential situation. By saying this I do not suggest that we do not need to have knowledge about what loneliness is, but rather that we must ask ourselves "What does it feel like for this particular child, this unique person, to be lonely?" We must turn back to the child's unique world of experience since only the "experience can open up understanding that restores a sense of embodied knowing" (van Manen, 1991, p. 9). Understanding each individual child's subjective loneliness feeling is perhaps the key to our tactful actions. This understanding distinguishes a pedagogical living with children who feel lonely from a non-pedagogical one.

If we understand the question "What does it feel like for the child to be lonely?" as simply asking the child directly "Do you feel lonely?" we have not yet reached the pedagogical understanding of the meaning of loneliness in the child's life, nor have we acted tactfully. Such a direct question might be experienced as intrusive and inflict damage. Perhaps such a direct question can perplex the child and hamper the possible positive relation between us and the child. We need to respect children's right to keep their feelings private. We cannot force the

sharing, but we can make ourselves available to the child so he or she can come to us whenever ready. And our "being available" is not simply "being there"--it is our pedagogical attentiveness, our pedagogical perceptiveness, our readiness to listen. And if the chid comes to us to share his or her feelings with us, and in the flow of our conversation we ask "Do you feel lonely?" or "How does it feel for you to be lonely?", we have a greater chance to hear the child's story. It is the child's story that invites us to critically reflect, and the insights gained through this reflection will lead us to a personal appropriation of a moral intuition. Yet we must remind ourselves that, especially with young children, such sharing might not have the narrative structure of a story. Our sensitive observing, along with our pedagogical intuition, will help us become aware of the feelings and intentions of the child.

It is also our responsibility, I believe, to not only listen to and understand children's loneliness feelings, but to also establish and maintain such pedagogical relations in our daily living with our children so they feel loved, respected, and cared for. These relations, however, that we, as adults can establish and maintain, are different for parents and for professional educators.

Naturally parents have much more opportunity than teachers to act tactfully and thoughtfully in ordinary situations so that their children do not feel lonely, left alone, or neglected. Essentially, parent-child relationship is a person-to-person relationship which ideally leaves no room for loneliness feeling. Yet it is also true that many parents' everyday life actions and interactions with children are to a certain extent routinized, and thus have lost some of possibilities for thoughtful acting. The positive side of having habits and routines at home, however, is that they give children a sense of security and directionality. Having breakfast, lunch and supper at a particular time, having a "story time", going for walks and so on, may have a deep pedagogical significance in children's lives since they are part of developing a bond between the child and the parents. Some of these routines and habits may even become children's "second nature". They create an atmosphere of communion as a comfortable intimacy found by a child with his or her family.

But the habits and routines may also be blind, mechanical behaviour that make no sense to the child. If, for example, a parent insists that a child should have supper at a particular time but the rest of the family has it much later, then a child having to eat alone feels separated from the rest of the family, isolated and lonely. A child who is not allowed to have secrets from the parents and whose parents go through his or her pockets or back pack to search for hidden secrets, is already predisposed to shame, isolation, and loneliness. A child who is not allowed to participate in his or her parents' "adults only" parties and is sent to his or her room to watch television, is a lonely child. Blind, mechanical habits and routines that have no

personal meaning to the child open space between the parents and the child. And loneliness is one way of experiencing this space.

Van Manen (1991) suggests that teachers' and other professional educators' relations with children differs from the parent-child relation in three fundamental respects. First, a relation between a teacher and a student is oriented to a certain subject matter, and to the world with which this subject matter is concerned. The teacher is oriented to students in terms of orienting the students to the subject matters that give school learning its pedagogical significance. Second, it requires a two-way intentional relationship. The teacher intends the students to learn and grow in respect to the subject area that the teacher teaches. In turn, the students need to have a desire, a willingness to learn, and preparedness to learn. Third, the pedagogical relation between teacher and students has a special personal quality. This personal quality of the relation does not mean that the teacher necessarily has to maintain one-to-one relations with every one of his or her students, but rather that the teacher is there in a personal way for those students. But are we, as professional educators, really present to our students in a personal way? What does it mean for us to involve ourselves personally with students? Do we even consider such an option in our daily struggle to "cover" the curriculum? Is there any room in the curriculum to talk about children's feelings? Do we allow our students to see us as persons? And if we do not, how could we expect them believe that we "see" them as persons? Have we forgotten that for many of our students the school is their only home?

Perhaps teachers and other professional educators in our contemporary Western society, where children receive less genuine attention from their parents, should use all the opportunities they can to thoughtfully consider how particular situations appear from the child's point of view, how the child experiences his or her world at home, at school, and in the community. We need to not only "recognize" children's feelings, but most of all to respect them. We need to show children our sympathy and acceptance of their "bad" feelings. Feeling lonely is a "bad" feeling, as many of the children in this study defined it. But do not children need to know that feeling bad is feeling too? Do they not need to know that their "bad feelings" will be accepted too? Do they not need to know that there is no need to be ashamed of their "bad" feelings? It is our, adults' responsibility to show children that having "bad" feelings is part of being human, and surely the only way to stop having bad feelings would be to stop feeling anything at all.

We need to live with hope for our children. If we respect the child's loneliness feeling, if we are able to come to know this lonely child as a unique person, and if we value the child as someone of quality and depth, we have no reason to give up our hope that this child will meet someone else who will value him or her the way we did. The child has no reason to give up his

or her hope either. We cannot and should not replace the child's parents; we cannot substitute the child's peer friendship, but we can and should provide the child with the opportunity to experience the joy of togetherness. Only then can we, as professional educators, help children to learn not only to stand less fearfully by themselves, but to stand up for themselves.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

> Seeing is to lay bare the core of everything, to witness the unknown and to glimpse into the unknowable. As such, it doesn't bring one solace. Seers ordinarily go to pieces on finding out that the existence is incomprehensibly complex and that our normal awareness maligns it with its limitations. (Castaneda, 1991, p. 53)

This study began with a concern with our understanding of young children's lived experiences of loneliness. Despite the growing body of scientific literature regarding young children's loneliness, the nature of children's experiences of loneliness and the meaning that these experiences play in children's lives and development has been limited and inadequate. My intention in this study, however, has not been to offer a theory, or a "more comprehensive" scheme of children's loneliness. Rather I have attempted to explore the experience of loneliness in a phenomenological manner as developed by van Manen (1990). In this study I have been primarily interested in the aspects of childhood loneliness experiences that have been overlooked in psychological, psychiatric, and pedagogical literature. Thus my main interest has not been in exploring the causes, or "whys" of loneliness, but rather in elucidating aspects of the lived world of a lonely child. In the process of exploring the phenomenon of children's loneliness I have been guided by thematic insights derived from experiential accounts and literature. The organization of the themes in the study, as a human science text, has been based on contrasting the phenomenon of loneliness with similar yet different experiences of aloneness, solitude, separation, and boredom. In this chapter I will provide a set of brief descriptions of some of the implicit themes that have guided the writing of this text. Of course, these themes have not "exhausted" all possible themes associated with the phenomenon of children's loneliness. I am fully aware of the reality that many aspects of childhood loneliness have not been developed in this study. I hope, however, that the themes that have been explored in the study are essential to our pedagogical understanding of the phenomenon of children's loneliness and are helpful in drawing out some possible pedagogical implications. I also hope that some of the themes developed in this study may serve to evoke in educational practitioners further reflections, provocations, extrapolations, or objections which may lead to even deeper understanding of the meaning of loneliness in children's lives.

For young children loneliness is often an experience of being by themselves. Being physically alone, however, refers to a quite neutral state of being which contains a limitless

number of possibilities for the person involved. But loneliness is unlike any other way of being alone; it is an awareness of being alone that changes the child's entire world. A child's loneliness feeling disrupts his or her intimate relation with the world of surrounding things at home--the things in the child's lived space remain the same, in the very same places, yet they change, they become different. Loneliness feeling separates the child from the surrounding things and thus it destroys the mutual appropriation of their being toward one another.

A child's sense of time is tied up with his or her loneliness feeling. In the experience of loneliness time becomes a stranger; time is experienced as being stretched out.

Loneliness is experienced as silence, as hollow silence that fills the emptiness in the child's lived space but comes from within rather than from outside. This silence is a sign for the detachment from those whom the child loves and misses.

Loneliness is experienced bodily as a "kind of cold" from within, as a lost of desire to move--the body becomes somehow heavier yet not strong enough to move.

Children grow when they are lonely. The experience of loneliness expands their awareness and sensitivity towards the world, others, and themselves.

In the experience of loneliness the child realizes that there is space between him or her and the others. But from this distance, felt in the experience of loneliness, a child may discover the deepest meaning of others to him or her. In loneliness a child discovers the meaning of being loved, the meaning of not only being "with" the other, but "for" the other. In the experience of loneliness children realize their need to be of worth to someone else who has a particular worth for them. Thus the true being of loneliness is that it becomes an experience changing the person experiencing it.

Loneliness is a powerful, overwhelming experience that may expand children's awareness and sensitivity towards the world, others and themselves, but in loneliness children are not and cannot be with themselves. It is in the experience of solitude that a child can discover who he or she is, and can be **with** his or her self. In the experience of solitude a child is "in tune" with the present moment, with the place in which he or she dwells physically, and with his or her own self. In contrast, in the experience of loneliness a child feels detached, estranged from the surrounding world, others and even himself or herself.

Unlike loneliness which just befalls the child, solitude is self-initiated; it comes and goes in its own genuine moments as a capacity of the self to find itself.

The child's secret place is a place where the child can find solitude. The child's secret place does not belong to a shared-in-common world--it is "a home within the home" for a child. In the secret place the child separates himself or herself from others in order to break through the

common pattern of everyday life. In the secret place the child is alone yet self-sufficient. In the world of the secret place the child is in a dialogue with himself or herself, but this dialogue does not involve questions and answers. It is rather self-reflection, an opportunity to see things in a new light, to become aware of a desire for new meaning, a new way of life. Thus the child's alone-ness in the secret place allows a self-creating process in which the child discovers his or her "inner" world. The secret place allows the child to "come to himself or herself."

The secret place is the young child's pathway to discovery of his or her personal identity in aloneness. But to have a secret place becomes possible only when a child is capable of distinguishing himself or herself from the rest of the world, and from the others. This is not an easy task to accomplish. It is a process of learning to be alone. Thus solitude is not a way around loneliness--it is through loneliness. And it is through solitude that children can learn to confront and overcome their fear of loneliness.

A child is not always able to find the peacefulness of solitude in his or her secret place (when, for example the secret place becomes a hiding place). There are moments when a child becomes suddenly aware of his or her aloneness that calls the child to the relationship with special others. And when these others are not there for the child, loneliness takes the place of solitude. The child can no longer be with himself or herself--rather the child needs to be with others.

Unlike the secret place, where the child is oriented to himself or herself, in the shared-in-common world the child is oriented to others and thus he or she is dependent on their presence or absence, on their willingness to be there for the child. In the shared-in-common world the child is vulnerable to his or her imagined or real fears. The child can be alone and lonely only in such a world. In the secret place the child enjoys the secret intimacy of aloneness. In the common world, the child suffers from his or her aloneness--aloneness that can become unbearable loneliness.

Young children are particularly vulnerable to loneliness feelings while separated from their parents. Children experience separation as loss--loss of a parent and loss of the child's "taken for granted" flow of life. Loneliness can be experienced as loss too, but what is lost in the experience of loneliness is the child's sense of integrity with the surrounding world rather than the familiar world itself.

The surrounding world changes its appearance in the experience of loneliness, although it does not become chaotic like in the experience of physical separation. In contrast to the experience of separation, what really changes in the experience of loneliness is not the

surrounding world, but rather the child's being in the world.

When the individuals are physically separated they are disconnected, kept or forced apart for some reason. In the experience of loneliness the feeling of separateness stands as an opposite to relatedness and not only as an expression of a physical separation. It is not only the physical separation that lets a child be vulnerable to the loneliness feeling; it is rather the lack of the sense of relatedness that let loneliness be even in the presence of the child's parents.

Parents' physical presence ("thereness") gives a child a feeling of security not only in a sense of order and directionality, but also in a sense of protection. Yet "thereness" does not always mean togetherness; it may just provide a child with "space" within certain boundaries in which he or she feels safe while alone in the felt presence of the parent. Parents' "thereness" provides a child with an opportunity to explore and master his or her capacity to be alone in a near proximity but not in an immediate presence of the parent. Thus the "thereness" does not necessarily require responsiveness in a context of continuity; it is just a possibility of togetherness. What is important, therefore, is not only our, as parents and educators, physical presence ("thereness"), but most of all our way of being present in children's lives.

A child may feel excluded and lonely when the parents' presence is not experienced as togetherness. Togetherness or distance appears with the physiognomy of the world. And the world has a different physiognomy when a child feels excluded, almost forgotten from an event in which his or her parents are actively involved, or feels separated from a familiar flow of the family life while keeping a secret, or observes from a distance a group of other children playing, talking, laughing. Thus the different modes of existence of the loneliness feeling is experienced in the perceived change of the physiognomy of the world.

A child's loneliness feeling is perhaps the most painful when he or she feels separated, excluded, cut off from the shared world of others. The desire to belong to others' shared world, the world outside the child himself or herself, on the one hand, and the impossibility of reaching this desire on the other hand, creates a vacuum not only between the child and the others, but most of all in the child's self. This vacuum may be experienced in loneliness as inner emptiness.

In boredom the desire, whether the child desires something or there is nothing he or she desires, is conditioned outside the child's self. Thus in boredom the child feels acted upon rather than active. While bored a child feels alienated from the surrounding world which, being empty and meaningless, is experienced as remote and dull. In the experience of loneliness too, a child may feel the lack of intimacy in his or her relationship with the surrounding world. But in

the experience of loneliness, in a contrast to the experience of boredom, children feel not only the distance between themselves and the surrounding world, but most of all the distance between themselves and significant others.

Boredom as "there is nothing I desire" announces that one does not care about anything. A child may feel that there is nothing he or she desires in a situation which provides too little or too much of interest. In loneliness, in contrast, the option "there is nothing I desire" is not present. Children experience loneliness as a pain from not being able to share their selves--their thoughts, truths, feelings and desires--with those whom they love. In loneliness a child is longing for communion; in boredom he or she may not.

Boredom as "there is something I desire" may be experienced as restlessness and may lead to countless attempts to find "some-thing" that can help the child to escape boredom. "Keeping busy" while changing actions, however, may not be an antidote to boredom since a child's full involvement in any action is impossible. The sense of futility precedes and forestalls the child's endeavour. In the experience of loneliness too, a child's longing for communion may lead him or her to seek someone, anyone whose presence can dispel the threat of loneliness, even if this anyone replaces it with boredom. But when a child who feels bored becomes aware of his or her need to be with a significant other, a child is no longer bored--a child is lonely.

The question of the pedagogy of loneliness is a fundamental moral question regarding our moment to moment living with children in the contemporary fractured world. Thus the pedagogy of children's loneliness feelings raises the issue of the ethical responsibility of the adult for the manner in which young people are subjects of loneliness in various social settings.

There exists an inner connectedness between children's loneliness (in all its modes of existence) and adults' presence and supervision. Both lack of supervision (as an absence of a person responsible for providing supervision, or as a lack of pedagogical attentiveness and watchfulness), and the abundance of adults supervision may open up the possibility for children's loneliness feelings. Children who are overcrowded, who are never alone even in their bedrooms, are neither "cured" of loneliness nor are they "less" lonely than those who spend hours alone behind locked doors.

Pedagogical understanding of children's loneliness includes our "embodied knowing" how the competing measures of intimacy and distance should be balanced so the kind of supervision we provide does not deprive our children of privacy, nor does it make them vulnerable to loneliness feelings. But pedagogical understanding of loneliness is not simply a question about how much supervision we need to provide our children--it is rather a question

regarding our ability to maintain a pedagogical relation with our children despite the reality of our demanding world which prevents us from being constantly physically present in our children's daily lives.

The quality of our presence in children's lives is expressed in our genuine attentiveness, in our willingness to really listen to children, in the kind of thoughtfulness of which we are capable. We need to make ourselves available to children in such a way that they can not only come to us ready to share, but that children can experience, while being with us, the joy of togetherness.

Pedagogical understanding of the phenomenon of children's loneliness which is always concerned with unique and practical circumstances, is not possible without our authentic interest in the child as a person. It is not possible without our capacity for trustful sympathy either. Only then can we feel "called upon" by the child, and only then can we act responsively and responsibly to the child.

We need, in our daily life with children not only to recognize their loneliness feelings, but most of all to respect their human feelings which have a unique place in children's development and personal growth.

EPILOGUE

It is perhaps the most natural thing for a person to reflect on his or her work after it is completed. Yet it took me quite a long time to separate myself from the text with which I have become one, and to see it as "some-thing" distinct, independent from my own self. Perhaps it would have taken me even longer if a dream of mine had not provoked such reflection. Just before I started preparing the presentation of my thesis for my defence, I had a dream in which I was having a conversation with the external examiner of my study. I did not ask him directly, "How did you find the study?" rather, I was looking at him anxiously waiting for his "verdict." He was trying to avoid my eyes. I got the feeling that something was wrong. Finally he looked at me and said: "You did a lot of reading and a lot of work, but to tell you the truth there is no such a phenomenon." I woke up in the middle of the night and could not go back to sleep. I still have this bitterness in my heart. This dream, however, provoked a critical self reflection on my work. I started examining the main points of my study in order to find where and how I might have failed to grasp and describe the nature of the phenomenon of children's loneliness. In other words, I started asking myself what in the study might have led the external examiner of my study to the conclusion that "there is no such a phenomenon."

The first question that I asked myself was: "Did my study fail to aim at children's lived experiences of loneliness, and instead had a character of conceptualization?" But how could the study possibly fail in this regard since it was based on children's lived experiences of loneliness? In the study there were descriptions of childhood experiences of loneliness gathered from the participants, my son, myself, and from the literature. My role as a researcher was, on the one hand, to describe the lived-through quality of children's lived experiences of loneliness, and on the other hand, to describe the meaning of the expression of these lived experiences.

Of course, I am fully aware that it is impossible to grasp these lived experiences in their immediate manifestation. It is well accepted among phenomenologically oriented researchers that it is only possible to grasp lived experience reflectively as past presence. Each lived experience of loneliness is a unity that makes it into something unique which has allowed me, upon reflection, to grasp the essence of the experience. But each lived experience is mediated by expression (talk or a written text) and thus it has a strong element of interpretation. So, if I have failed to produce a good phenomenological description of the phenomenon, it must be in the part of interpretation.

Could I have done the study with less interpretation and more description? Would that be a better way of showing the essence of the phenomenon of children's loneliness? I examined this possibility. I tried to imagine the study in another format (for example in the format

suggested by Giorgi who strictly followed Husserl's phenomenological method), but I could not. I felt that I had made the "right choice" by carrying on the study from the hermeneutic phenomenological perspective developed by Dr. van Manen. This method demands from the researcher an interpretation along with the description of the phenomenon. The result, the process of writing and the written text itself becomes, therefore, the expression of the researcher's ability to see and to show the phenomenon. I have lived through every word in the thesis and I trust that in the study the phenomenological description of children's loneliness experiences is such that we can nod to, recognizing it as an experience that we have had or could have had. In other words, I trust that the phenomenological description provided in the study is validitated by lived experience and it validitates lived experience.

But if I did not fail to describe the lived-through quality of children's lived experiences of loneliness, as it seems to me now, where else could I have failed? The only possible answer that I came up with was that my description, although properly aimed at children's lived experiences of loneliness, somehow failed to elucidate the lived meaning of these experiences. Perhaps I have provided an explication of the meanings instead.

So I looked at the study again. Was my study "free" of conceptual clarification or theoretical explication of meaning? Husserl suggests that one must take hold of the phenomenon and then place outside of it one's knowledge about the phenomenon. But how could I forget or ignore what is already known? If I have tried to do so, why did I need to have so many pages on existing theoretical perspective on loneliness? Have I done that just to have such a section in my thesis? No, I have not. The existing explicating assumptions did indeed play an important role in the study, but their role was to help me to come to terms with my own assumptions, and in many cases to turn this knowledge against itself. The existing theoretical assumptions on loneliness have helped me to not only raise phenomenological questions, but also to open up these questions, and to keep them open to other possibilities. The main questions that are explored in the study, therefore, remain open. Even in the article that I recently submitted I asked again "What is the pedagogy of loneliness?", "What does it mean for teachers to reach a pedagogical understanding of childhood loneliness?" but I tried to explore other specific modes of pedagogical understanding of children's loneliness. As I was preparing the article, I came across a study (Page, 1991) assessing 200 elementary school teachers' perceptions of the importance of loneliness and their ability for assisting children to avoid loneliness and isolation. Based on the findings, the study suggests that colleges and universities which "train" perspective elementary teachers should offer information and "training" in dealing with childhood loneliness. It is suggested, therefore, that perspective teachers should be taught "how to do" skills to assist children to "avoid loneliness and isolation." But no

matter how practically compelling these "how to do" skills may be, would they bring the perspective teachers any closer to understanding the nature of childhood loneliness itself?

If we understand loneliness as a dangerous disease, we should really try to assist children to avoid it. But is it possible to teach children to avoid something that does not exist in the "world out there" independent from the person experiencing it? Loneliness is not "something" that a person may or may not feel, or may or may not learn to avoid like a hot stove or an open fireplace. If it were the case, then it would be much easier for teachers to learn certain techniques to deal with the problem.

Through my study I have learned that the phenomenon of children's loneliness is very complex, and it is neither possible, nor appropriate, to be reduced to any kind of social interaction problem, and that there is no one simple solution to the "problem." But does that mean that pedagogues can do little to alleviate children's loneliness? Certainly not. The question, however, is not only what can we do, but first how do we understand children's loneliness? Or better, what kind of understanding of the phenomenon of childhood loneliness do we need to achieve to help children who feel lonely?

The pedagogical understanding of the phenomenon of childhood loneliness, as a way of being in touch with the real world of children, is what we need to achieve. Our pedagogical understanding is realized in practice through what van Manen calls pedagogical tact. And our pedagogical understanding, our pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact are not learnable as mere behavioral principles, techniques, or methods (van Manen, 1991).

I believe that to understand the child's loneliness feelings we need to start with an understanding of the child's life-world. More precisely, we need to understand how the world looks for the child when he or she feels lonely. Furthermore, we as educators, I believe, need to ask ourselves "What kind of human beings will our students become if we teach them to avoid loneliness?" What kind of human beings would we be today if we, as children, had not felt lonely without our dearest friends in a new school environment? Do our students need to learn to be ashamed of their "bad" feelings as many of the participants defined loneliness feelings? I believe that the only way one could stop having "bad" feelings would be to stop feeling anything at all. But is this the message that we want to give our students?

It is true that children can be even more adversely affected than adults by disturbing experiences such as loneliness because they are less able to defend themselves against the effects of such experiences. But these disturbing experiences of life, as existential philosophy has commonly taught us, fulfil an important function-- they tear us out of our everyday taken-for-grantedness and lead us to a more authentic existence. I am convinced that loneliness is one of these experiences. I believe that the ability to know and appreciate and lovingly accept

our loneliness may be the ability of the wisest and best person.

Loneliness is a change in the mode of our awareness. Loneliness expands children's awareness and sensitivity towards the world, others and themselves. Yet in the experience of loneliness children feel detached, estranged from the surrounding world, others and even themselves. They realize that there is space between them and others, but from this distance they may also discover what others mean to them, the meaning of togetherness, and the meaning of being loved.

I am convinced, therefore, that not only is there "such a phenomenon" as childhood loneliness, but that loneliness is an inherent part of the very process of becoming a person. It is through the experience of loneliness that a child learns to be with oneself, to become oneself. In coming apart from others a child gains a strong sense of his or her own identity, becomes more self-sufficient and less dependent on others. Loneliness feelings, therefore, have their unique place in children's development and personal growth.

I believe that this study, as the first extensive phenomenological study of elementary school children's feelings of loneliness, is a step foreword in our humanistic understanding of the phenomenon. The study shows the complex manner in which young children's sense of loneliness modifies and impacts on their lives and on their appropriation of human relations, social space, lived time, and the integration of self and world. Thus, the study makes a contribution to this understanding by not only providing "thick" phenomenological description of children's lived experiences of loneliness, but also by exploring the question of the pedagogy of loneliness as adults' ethical responsibilities for the manner in which young people are subjects of loneliness in various social settings.

REFERENCES

Anderson, L. A. (1986). Model of estrangement-including a theoretical understanding of loneliness. Psychological Reports, 58, 683-695.

Anderson, L. , Mullins, L. C. , & Johnson, D. P. (1987). Parental intrusion versus social isolation: A dichotomous view of the sources of loneliness. In M. Hojat, & R. Crandall (Eds.), Loneliness: Theory, research and applications [Special Issue]. Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality, 2, 125-134.

Arendt, H. (1978). The life of The Mind. London: Secker & Warburg.

Asher, S. R., & Wheeler, V. A. (1985). Children's loneliness: A comparison of rejected and neglected peer status. Journal of Consulting and Cognitive Psychology, 53, 500-505.

Asher, S. R., Hymel, S., & Renshaw, P. D. (1984). Loneliness in children. Child Development, 55, 1456-1464.

Asher, S. R. & Parker, J. G. (1989). Significance of Peer Relationship Problems in Childhood. In B. H. Schneider, G. Attili, J. Nadel, & R. Weissberg (Eds.), Social Competence in Developmental Perspective (pp. 5-25). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Asher, S. R., Parkhurst, J. T., Hymel, S., & Williams, G. A. (1990). Peer rejection and loneliness in childhood. In S. R. Asher & J. D.Coie (Eds.), Peer rejection in childhood (pp. 253-274). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Avrahami, J. (1992). Social competence and loneliness among two groups of students with mild mental retardation. Unpublished Master's thesis, Tel Aviv University.

Barritt, L., Beekman, T., Bleeker, H., & Muderij, K. (1983) The World Through Children's Eyes: Hide and Seek & Peekaboo. Phenomenology + Pedagogy. Volume 1, Number 1. 140-160.

Becker, C. (1986). Interviewing in human science research. Methods, 1, 101-124.

Benjamin, W. (1969). The Storyteller: Reflection on the Works of Nikolai Leskov. In H. Arendt (Ed.), (H. Zohn, Trans.), Illuminations (pp. 83-110). New York: Schocken.

Bollnow, O. F. (1961). Lived Space. Philosophy Today, 5, 31-39.

Booth, R. (1983, March). Toward an understanding of loneliness. Social Work, 28(2), 116-119.

Bowlby, J. 91960). Separation anxiety. Internal Journal of Psych-Analysis, 41, 89-113.

Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and loss. Vol. I: Attachment. New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1973). Attachment and loss. Vol. II: Separation: Anxiety and anger. New York: Basic Books.

Brennan. T. (1982). Loneliness in adolescence. In L. A. Peplau & D. Perlman (Eds.), Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research and therapy (pp. 269-290). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Bullock, J. R. (1993). Children's loneliness and their relationships with family and peers. Family Relations, 42, 46-49.

Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1950). The Phenomenological Approach to the Problem of Feelings and Emotions. In M. I. Reymert (Ed.), Feelings and Emotions (pp. 127-141). The Mooseheart Symposium. New York: McCraw Mill.

Camus, A. (1968). Death in the Soul. Lyrical and Critical Essays. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Cassidy, J. & Asher, S. R. (1992). Loneliness and Peer Relations in Young Children. Child Development, 63, 350-365.

Castaneda, C. (1991). The Fire from Within. Washington Square Press.

Cavafy, C. P. (1975). Monotony. In G. Savidis (Ed.), Collected Poems (pp. 45). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Day, W. F. (1969). Radical behaviorism in reconciliation with phenomenology. Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 12, 315-328.

de Jong-Gierveld, J., & Raadschelders, J. (1982). Types of loneliness. In L. A. Peplau, & D. Perlman (Eds.), Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research and therapy (pp. 105-122). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Derlaga, V. J., & Margulis, S. T. (1982). Why loneliness occurs: The interrelationship of social-psychological and privacy concepts. In L. A. Peplau, & D. Perlman (Eds.), Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research and therapy (pp. 105-122). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Dilthey, W. (1985). Introduction to the human sciences. Toronto: Scholarly Book Services.

Dodge, K. A. (1983). Behavioral antecedents of peer social status. Child Development, 54, 1386-1399.

Eddy,P. D., Jr. (1961). Loneliness: A discrepancy within phenomenological self. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Adelphi College.

Ellison, C. W. (1978). Loneliness: A social developmental analysis. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 6, 3-17.

Freud, S. (1973). The complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. XVI, 407.

Frey, D. E. (1986). Communication Boardgames with Children. In C. E. Schaefer & S. E. Reid (Eds.), Game Play: Therapeutic Use of Childhood Games (pp. 21- 39). A Wiley-interscience Publication. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Fromm-Reichmann, F. Loneliness (1959/1980). In J. Hartog, J. R. Audy & Y. Cohen (Eds.), The Anatomy of Loneliness (pp. 338-362). New York: International University Press.

Frost, R. (1930) Collected Poems, London: Longmans.

Gadamer, H. (1975). Truth and method. New York: Seabury.

Gaylin, W. (1979). Feelings: Our Vital Signs. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Gibran, K. (1973). The Prophet. New York: Alfred . A . Knopf.

Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). Phenomenology and psychological research. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Goswick, R. A., & Jones, W. H. (1981). Loneliness, self-concept and adjustments. Journal of Psychology, 107, 237-240.

Gotesky, R. (1965). Aloneness, loneliness, isolation, solitude. J. M. Edie (Ed.), An Invitation to Phenomenology (pp. 211-239). Chicago: Quardrangle Books.

Gottman, J. M., Gonso, J., & Rasmussen, B. (1975). Social interaction, social competence, and friendship in children. Child Development, 46, 709-718.

Grahame, K. (1908). The Wind in the Willows. New York: The Viking Press.

Graham, R. L. (1972). Dove. New York: Bantam Books.

Harper, R. (1967). The Seventh Solitude. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkings Press.

Hartog, J. (1980). The Anlage and Ontogeny of Loneliness. In J. Hartog, J. R. Audy, & Y. Cohen (Eds.), The Anatomy of Loneliness (pp. 13-34). New York: International Universities Press.

Hartup, W. W., & Sancilio, M. F. (1986). Children's friendships. In E. Schopler & G. B. Mesibov (Eds.), Social behavior in autism (pp. 61-80). New York: Plenum.

Hayden, L., Tarulli, D., & Hymel, S. (1988, May). Children talk about loneliness. Paper presented at the University of Waterloo Conference on Child Development, Waterloo, Canada.

Heidegger, M. (1927/1962). Being and time. (J. Macquarrie & Robinson, Transl.), New York: Harper & Row.

Heidegger, M. (1964). Basic Writings. New York: Harper & Row.

Heidegger, M. (1971). On the way to language. (D. Hertz, trans.) New York: Harper & Row.

Heinlein, L. & Spinner, B. (1985, April). Measuring emotional loneliness in children. Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Heller, A. (1979). A Theory of Feelings. Van Gorcum Assen, The Netherlands.

Hobson, R. F. (1974, January). Loneliness. Journal of Analytical Psychology, 19(1), 71-89.

Hojat, M. (1982, September). Loneliness as a function of parent child and peer relations. Journal of Psychology, 112(1), 129-133.

Jones, W. H., Freeman, J. A., & Goswick, R. A. (1981). The persistence of loneliness: Self and other determinants. Journal of Personality, 49, 27-48.

Jones, W. H. (1982). Loneliness and Social Behavior. In L. A. Peplau, & D. Perlman (Eds.),

Loneliness: A Sourcebook of Current Theory, Research and Therapy (pp. 238-254). New York: Wiley.

Josselson, R. (1992). The space between us. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Killinger, J. (1980). The Loneliness of Children. New York: The Vanguard Press.

Klapp, O. E. (1986). Overload and Boredom. New York: Greenwood Press.

Kuhn, R. C. (1976). The Demon of Noontide. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Kurtz, I. (1983). Loneliness. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Kvale, S. (1983). The qualitative research interview: A phenomenological and a hermeneutical mode of understanding. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 14, 171-196.

Ladd, G. W. (1983). Social networks of popular, average, and rejected children in school settings. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 29, 283-307.

Langeveld, M. J. (1967/1983). Phenomenology + Pedagogy. Volume 1, Number 1.

Laurence, M. (1978). A Bird in the House. Toronto: McClelland and Steward Ltd.

Lennon, J. & McCartney (1966). Eleanor Rigby. In B. Ryan (Ed.), (1972). Sounds of Silence: Poems and Songs about Loneliness. New York: Scholastic books services.

Linschoten, J. (1987). On Falling Asleep. In J. J. Kockelmans (Ed.), Phenomenological Psychology: the Dutch School, Dordrecht; Boston: Nijhoff. (pp. 79-117).

Luftig, R. L. (1987). Children's loneliness, perceived ease in making friends and estimated social adequacy: Development and social metacognition. Child Study Journal, 17, 35-53.

Marcoen, A. & Brumagne, M. (1985). Loneliness among children and young adolescents. Developmental Psychology, 21, 1025-1031.

Marcoen, A., & Goossens, L. (1990, April). Loneliness and aloneness in adolescence: Introducing a multidimensional measure and some developmental perspectives. Paper presented at the annual American Educational Research Association conference, Boston.

Margalit, M. (1994). Loneliness Among Children With Special Needs: Theory, Research, Coping, and Intervention. Springer-Verlag New York, Inc.

Margalit, M. & Ronen, T. (1993). Loneliness and social competence among preadolescent with mild mental retardation. Mental Handicap Research, 6, 97-111.

Mathias, B. (1989). The Caretakers. Penguin Books.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). Phenomenology of Perception. London: Routeledge and Kegan Paul.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). The Child's Relations with Others. In J. Edie (Ed.), The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art,

History and Politics. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). The Visible and the Invisible. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1973). The Prose of the World. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Mijuskovic, B. L. (1979). Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature. Van Gorcum, Assen, The Netherlands.

Mijuskovic, B. L. (1984). Contingent Immaterialism: Meaning, Freedom, Time, and Mind. Amsterdam: B. R. Gruner Publishing Co.

Milne, A. A. (1979). When we were very young. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Moustakas, C. M. (1961). Loneliness. United States of America: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Moustakas, C. (1972). Loneliness and love. Engelewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Nietzsche, F. (1984). Human, all too human: a book for free spirits. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ostrov, E., & Offer, D. (1978). Loneliness and the adolescent. In S. Feinstein, & Gioviccini (Eds.), Adolescent Psychology. Vol. 4, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Packer, M. J. (1985). Hermeneutic inquiry in the study of human conduct. American Psychologist, 40, 1081-1093.

Packer, M. J. & Addison, R. B. (1989). Evaluating an Interpretive Account. In M. J. Packer & R. B. Addison (Eds.), Entering the Circle: Hermeneutic Investigation in Psychology (pp. 275-321). Albany: Sany Press.

Page, R. M. (1991). Assisting Children Avoid Loneliness and Isolation: Perceptions of Importance and Effectiveness Among Elementary School Teachers. Journal of Instructional Psychology. Vol. 18, No. 1, 69-72.

Paloutzian, R. F., & Janigian, A. S. (1987). Models and methods in loneliness research: Their status and direction. Special Issue: Loneliness: Theory, research, and applications. Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 2 (2, Pt 2), 31-36.

Parkinson, T. (Spring, 1977). The Art of Loneliness. The Ohio Review.

Paterson, J., Blashko, C., & Janzen, H. (1991). When you stand alone. Edmonton, Alberta: Three Pears Publishing.

Peplau, L. A., Miceli, M. & Morasch. (1982). Loneliness and self-evaluation. In L. A., Peplau & D. Perlman (Eds.), Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research and therapy (pp. 135-151). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Perlman, D., & Peplau, L. A. (1981). Toward a social psychology of loneliness. In R. Gilmour & S. Duck (Eds.), Personal relationships: Personal relationships in disorder (pp. 31-56). London: Academic Press.

Perlman, D., & Peplau, L. A. (1982). Theoretical Approaches to Loneliness. In L. A., Peplau & D. Perlman (Eds.), Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research and therapy (pp. 123-134). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Perlman, D. & Joshi, P. (1989). The Revelation of Loneliness. In M. Hojat & R. Crandall (Eds.), Loneliness: Theory, Research, and Applications (pp. 63-81). Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Piaget, J. (1967). Six Psychological Studies, Trans. A. Tenzer & D. Elkind. New York: Random House.

Piaget, J. (1971). The Child's Conception of Time. New York: An Intext Publisher.

Putallaz, M., & Wasserman, A. (1990). Children's entry behavior. In S. R. Asher & J. D. Coie (Eds.), Peer rejection in childhood (pp. 60-89). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rank, O. (1929). The Trauma of Birth. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Ricoeur, P. (1981). Hermeneutics and the human sciences. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, M. (1980). Housekeeping. New York: Earrar Straus Giroux.

Rogers, C. R. (1973). The lonely person and his experience in an encounter group. In Carl Rogers on encounter groups. New York: Harper & Row.

Rothbaum, F., & Weisz, J. R. (1989). Child psychopathology and the quest for control. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Rubin, Z. (1982). Children without Friends. In L. A. Peplau, & D. Perlman (Eds.), Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research and therapy (pp. 255-268). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Ruckmick, C. A. (1936). Psychology of feeling and emotion. New York and London: McGraw-Hill.

Russell, D., Peplau, L. A., & Cutrona, C. (1980). The reversed UCLA Loneliness Scale: Concurrent and Discriminant validity evidence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39 (3), 472-480.

Russell, D., Cutrona, C. E., Rose, J., & Yurko, K. (1984). Social and emotional loneliness: An examination of Weiss' typology of loneliness. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46, 1313-1321.

Ryle, G. (1953). Ordinary language. Philosophical Review, 62, 24-40.

Ryle, G. (1949/1980). The Concept of Mind. London: Hazell Watson & Vinery Ltd.

Sadler, W. A., Jr. (1969). Creative existence: Play as a pathway to personal freedom and community. Humanitas, 5, 57-80.

Sadler, W. A., Jr. & Johnson, T. B., Jr. (1980). From Loneliness to Anomia. In J. Hartog & J, R.

Cohen (Eds.), The Anatomy of Loneliness (pp. 34-65). New York: International University Press.

Schmitt, R. (1969). Martin Heidegger on Being Human: An Introduction to Sein und Zeit. New York: Random House.

Shaw, S. (1990). Returning Home. Phenomenology + Pedagogy, 8, 224-236.

Simmel, G. (1970). The Sociology of Georg Simmel. (K. H. Wolff, Trans.). New York: The Free Press.

Solano, C. H. (1980). Two measures of loneliness: A comparison. Psychological Reports, 46, 23-28.

Spacks, P. M. (1995). Boredom: The Literary History of a State of Mind. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Stokes, J. P. (1989). On the Usefulness of Phenomenological Methods. In M. Hojat & R. Crandall (Eds.), Loneliness: Theory, Research, and Applications (pp. 57-62). Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Storman, S. H. & Duff, R. E. (1982, November/December). The Latchkey Child: Whose Responsibility? Childhood Education, 76-79.

Strasser, S. (1977). Phenomenology of Feeling: An Essay on the Phenomena of the Heart. Duquesne University Press.

Sullivan, H. S. (1953). The interpersonal theory of psychiatry. 21, 37-43.

Suransky, V. P. (1982). The Erosion of Childhood. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Suttie, I. D. (1952). The Origins of Love and Hate. New York: Julian.

Tillich, P. (1963). The Eternal Now. New York: Charles Scibner's Sons.

Troutner, L. (1974). Existentialism and phenomenology in education. In D. E. Venton (Ed.), Time and education (pp. 162-189). New York: Teacher College Press.

Van Lennep, D. J. (1987). The Hotel Room. In J. J. Kockelmans (Ed.), Phenomenological Psychology: the Dutch School (pp. 209-215). Dordrecht; Boston: Nijhoff.

van den Berg, J. H. (1972). A different existence. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

van Manen, M. (1989). By the Light of Anecdote. Phenomenology and Pedagogy, 7, 232-253.

van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. London, Ontario: Althouse Press.

van Manen, M. (1991). The Tact of Teaching: the meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness. London, Ont.: Althouse Press.

van Manen, M. & Levering, B. (1996). Childhood's Secrets : intimacy, privacy, and the self reconsidered . New York: Teachers College Press.

Weiss, R. S. (1973). Loneliness: The experience of emotional and social isolation. Cambridge,

Mass.: MIT Press.

Weiss, R. S. (1987). Reflection on the Present State of Loneliness Research. In M. Hojat & R. Crandall (Eds.), Loneliness: Theory, Research, and Applications. A Special issue of the Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Part 2), 1-17.

Whitehorn, J. C., (1961). On loneliness and the incongruous self-image. Annals of Psychotherapy, 2, 15-17.

Willis, G. (1991). Phenomenological Inquiry: Life-World Perceptions. In E. C. Short (Ed.), Forms of Curriculum Inquiry (pp. 173-186). Albany: Suny Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1922). Tractatus logico-philosophicus (G. K. Ogden, Trans.). London: Routlege & Kegan Paul.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). Philosophical investigations. (G. Anscombe, Ed.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Woodward, H. (1988). The solitude of loneliness. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Wood, R. E. (1977). Introduction. In S. Strasser, Phenomenology of Feelings: An Essay on the Phenomena of the Heart. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh.

Zilboorg, C. Loneliness. (January, 1938). Atlantic Monthly, 45-54.

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

September 1, 1994

Dear Parents/ Guardians:

As a Doctoral Student in the department of Elementary Education at The University of Alberta, I am currently studying the relationship between children's acceptance by the peer group and children's feelings of loneliness. To that end, I would like the opportunity to work with the children in this school in a study focusing on the children's perceptions of their feelings of loneliness by the context in which they occur. This research project will be limited to one visit a week in the classrooms for a period of 4 to 5 months. As a researcher, I will observe children's free play settings (during lunch time recesses), and will have conversations with some of the children who seemed to have difficulties to interact in the peer group. To initiate my conversations with children from kindergarten to grade four I will use interpersonal communication boardgame, as well as puppets. In addition to the conversations, I may ask children from grade five and six to write about their understanding of loneliness feeling. The conversations with all children will be conduct individually and they will be taped and transcribed. The tapes will be used only for analysis and then destroyed. No original written document or its copy will appear in the thesis nor in any other publication that might come out of it. The names of all research participants will be changed so the anonymity of the students and the confidentiality of the information obtained will be assured.

The ultimate aim of the project, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, is to enhance the current pedagogical understanding of young children's feelings of loneliness.

And so, I am asking your permission for your child to take part in my study starting from September 1, 1994 until the end of January 1995. If you really do not wish your child to be part of this research project or if your child does not wish to be part of the project, you are within your rights to refuse permission and I will not include your child in the project. Even after permission is given, you may opt out of the project at any time if you or your child feel uncomfortable with the proceedings.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to working with your children, the teachers and you. If you wish further information please contact me at home or at work.

Yours truly,

Anna Kirova-Petrova

I hereby give permission for my child .....
to be part of the project as described above.

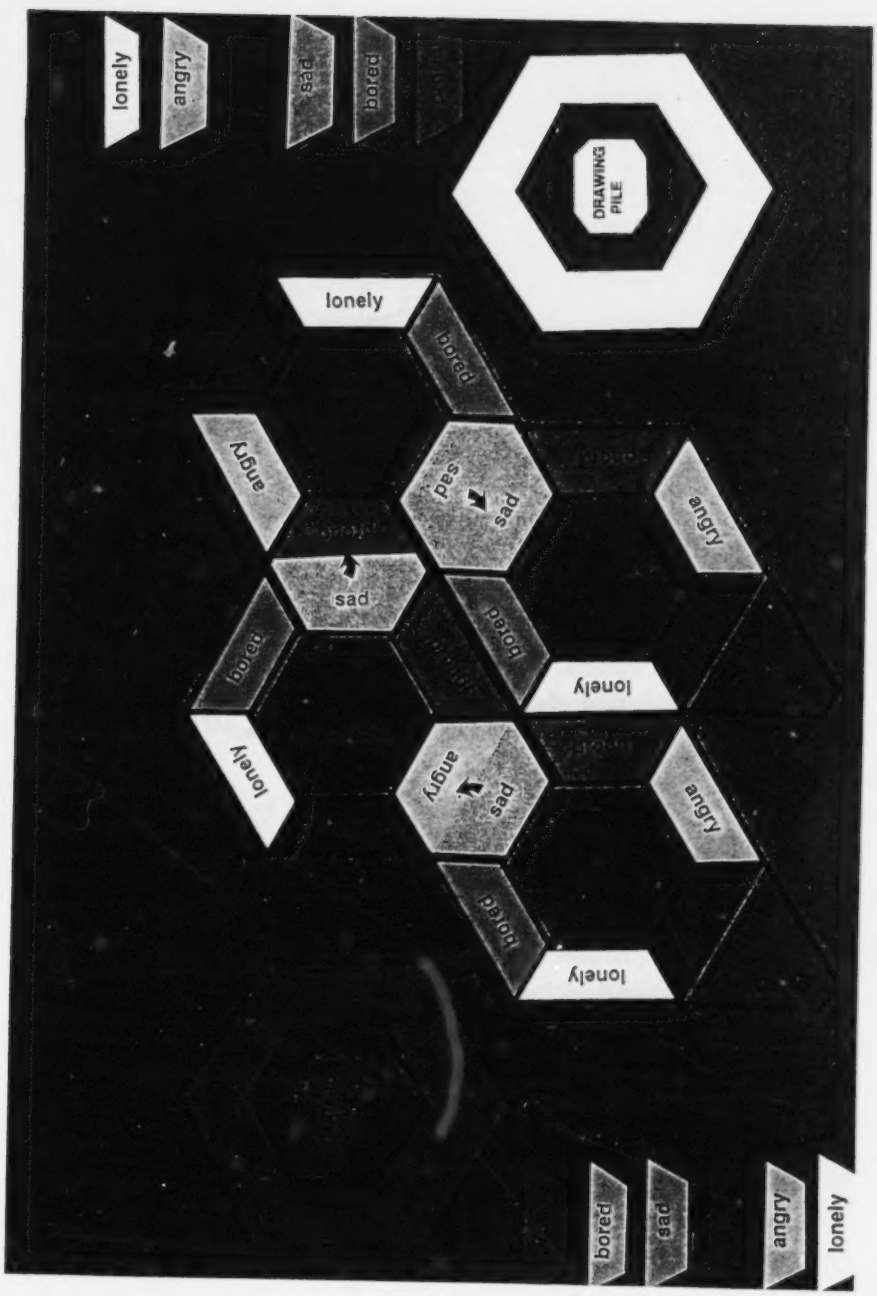
I also give permission for my child .....
to be photographed and tape-recorded.

I do not give permission for my child .....
to be involved in the project as described above.

Signed by parent/guardian .....

Date .....

APPENDIX B


lonely
angry
sad
bored
DRAWING PILE
lonely
bored
angry
sad
sad
bored
lonely
angry
lonely
bored
angry
sad
sad
bored
lonely
angry
lonely
bored
angry
sad
bored
sad
angry
lonely

APPENDIX C

Interpersonal Communication Game's Cards

1. Joseph was sitting silently in a corner constantly sucking his thumb. No one seemed to notice him. No one ever spoke to him.
How was Joseph feeling?

2. It was recess time. Everyone but Mina was having fun. "May I join you?" asked Mina gently. No one even bothered to answer her.
How was Mina feeling?

3. Brenda sat staring at the ground. She didn't even notice that she was hungry. "Why Amy invited everybody but me to her party?" Brenda wondered.
How was Brenda feeling?

4. Ted was having problem with his math assignment. He was trying to get help from other students in the group but no one seemed to notice his efforts.
How was ted feeling?

5. Kim's best friend just moved to an other city. "I wish he were here now. I really miss him," said Kim and sighed.
How was Kim feeling?

6. "It's not fair! I never get to choose the game," said Rob with eyes filled with tears.
How was Rob feeling?

7. "Look guys, I've got a new ball," said Harry. "Do you want to try it?" "No, we are playing something else, don't you see. We are playing 'Let's get lost'."
How was Harry feeling?

8. "How do you like my picture?" asked Andy. "It's ugly," said Ted and turned his back.
How was Andy feeling?

9. "But please Dad, everybody is going to this trip. I'll be good, I promise!" said Mary almost in tears. "No, you are not going!"
How was Mary feeling?

10. "My cat got lost yesterday," said Ann to her friend and brushed away a tear.
How was Ann feeling?

11. "The doctor said that I have to stay at home for at least three more days. I guess I'll have to miss your birthday party," said Mina to her best friend with a trembling voice.
How was Mina feeling?

12. Bob's best friend had an accident with his bike and had to stay in a hospital for a week. "I wish that had never happen to him," said Bob and sighed.
How was Bob feeling?

13. "Who do you think will be the best choice for this role?" asked the drama teacher. "Don, of course!" yelled the students. "Thank you," said Don and his eyes shone.
How was Don feeling?

14. "Kim, could you please help me with this question. I know that you are very good at math. "No problem," said Kim confidently.
How was Kim feeling?

15. "You did it! You won!" yelled Tony's friends. Tony's eyes shone.
How was Tony feeling?

16. "That is a very good picture, Lora," said the teacher. "You did a great job!" Lora smiled and said, "Thank you."
"How was Lora feeling?

17. "Stop bugging me! Don't you see I'm busy now?. Leave me alone!" shouted Ted and turned.
How was Ted feeling?

18. "You're cheating all the time, Mina'" shouted Lora. "I'm not playing with you! I'm not your friend anymore!"

How was Lora feeling?

19. "Stop teasing my little brother!" Bill said in a loud voice. His eyes flashed.
How was Bill feeling?

20. Ann saw Bob grab the toy car from the little boy. She ran toward Bob, shouting, "Give that back to him!"
How was Ann feeling?

21. Jack laughed until tears came to his eyes. Wendy and Jack became quiet. Suddenly they burst into laughter again.
How were they feeling?

22. Everybody in the school was getting ready for the Halloween celebration. The younger kids were impatient to put their costumes on. They were jumping up and down. Their faces were glowing and their eyes were sparkling.
How were they feeling?

23. "You may have a birthday party, Amy," said Amy's mother. Amy clapped her hands and jumped up and down.
How was Amy feeling?

24. Finally Don's best friend has got permission from his parents for sleeping over at Don's house.
How was Don feeling?

25. Mark knew that his friends were collecting money for his birthday present but when he opened the box he couldn't believe his eyes. "Thank you, guys!" said Mark.
How was Mark feeling?

26. "I'll be your best friend for ever," said Donna to Kathy. "I'll be your's too'" answered Kathy. They looked at each other's eyes and smiled.
How were they feeling?

27. Rob looked at his building blocks, then at his "Lego" sets, then at his toy cars. "There is nothing to do," said Rob to himself.

How was Rob feeling?

28. "Let me see what I've got to play with here," said Bob to himself in his new class room. "There is nothing new I guess," said Bob after awhile and sighed.
How was Bob feeling?

29. "Today will be the same as yesterday I guess," said Lora to herself. Even my favourite TV show is not on today.
How was Lora feeling?

30. "I thought that you found this book interesting," said Andy's mom. "Not anymore," answered Andy lying on the floor and staring at the carpets. "Why don't you make your space models?" asked the mother. "But mom, I made them yesterday. There is nothing to do now!"
How was Andy feeling?

APPENDIX D

Instructions to the Participants from Grades Five and Six

What is it like to be lonely?

Can you remember one time when you felt lonely? Think back and try to describe your experience as you live it through. If you have never been lonely try to imagine how a person at your age would feel if he/she were lonely.

When you describe the experience of being lonely please pay attention to the description of:
- the place where this experience occurred;
- the time when it occurred;
- other people that have been involved in this experience.

Here there are some questions that will help you to recall your experience:

The place:
- How did the place look like?
- How did the things around you smelled, felt, sounded?
- How did the things around you change when you felt lonely?

The time:
- How did time pass for you when you were lonely? Did time keep its usual tempo or did it change?

You and the Others:
- What did you do? How did your body feel?
- What did the others do?
- How did you act towards the others?
- How did you feel about your actions?
- How did the others act towards you?
- How did you feel about others' actions?

Thank you very much for your cooperation!